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ΕΒΛΑΨΘΗΜΟΥΝ

FORTY

DAYS

Lenten Counsels by
Twenty-One Anglicans

THESE FORTY DAYS

BOOKS for Lent are traditional, rather like turkey for Thanksgiving Day; indeed, books might be called the true Lenten food. Very often hunger felt in the body begins in the soul. Only sacraments and prayer, the steady practice of the presence of God will satisfy hunger and thirsting after righteousness, but books may easily point the way. Highly spiced, intellectual dishes are not wanted; what the working Christian requires is simple, solid fare prepared by experts skilled in day-to-day obedience to our Lord's command, "Feed my sheep." That expertness is abundantly found among the faithful priests, bishops, and archbishops who have contributed to *These Forty Days*. The spiritual nourishment herein comes from many (not all) sections of the worldwide Anglican Communion; in the list of authors, the names of the well-known are mingled with those of pastors known chiefly to their own flocks; all are men whose lives tell their faith as effectively as their words. Their offerings make this book Lenten food for the soul.



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THESE FORTY DAYS

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*Lenten Counsels by
Twenty-one Anglicans*

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE purpose of this book is to stimulate Lent reading among many busy people who feel they ought to mark the season of Lent in this way, but do not quite know how to begin. It consists of twenty-one sermons by representative preachers of the best sorts and merits within the Anglican Communion. Because the contributors include not only leading bishops but also experienced parish priests, from both sides of the Atlantic, it may be possible to obtain from their counsels a valuable cross-section of the Church's thought during the holy season of Lent.

The book has no system, but the sermons fall naturally into place, either from the occasion of their delivery, or from the subject matter with which they deal. They will be found to be links in a chain from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday. As one might expect, there is an extraordinary variety of treatment and approach. Nevertheless a balance has been sought, with a modest success, between sermons bearing on self-discipline and the cultivation of the virtues—indeed, the practice of religion—and sermons on the keeping of Lent. It is hoped that by this means freshness and interest will be sustained throughout for the reader, without loss of devotional tone. Appreciative thanks are due to the distinguished contributors who willingly consented to find suitable sermons for what they felt to be a book of some consequence.

N. H.

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THESE FORTY DAYS

HOW JESUS RAN HIS LIFE

The Most Rev. and Right Hon. F. D. COGGAN

IF you want to see how Jesus ran His life, you will find it summed up admirably in the last eleven verses of the first chapter of St. Mark. It would be worth your while to read these verses over slowly and carefully in any version of the New Testament which you have by you, and then to say to yourself: 'This is how He ran His life. Is it a pointer as to how I should run mine?' What better theme for Lenten meditation and resolve could there be than that?

'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

And Simon and they that were with him followed after Him.

And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee.

And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

But he went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter.' (*St. Mark* i. 35-45).

There, with three broad strokes of his pen, St. Mark delineates the pattern of the life and ministry of Jesus. We could summarize it like this—withdrawal; proclamation; compassion. Let us look at each in turn.

1. *Withdrawal*

First-century Palestine was no place of idyllic calm. True, Galilee in springtime was—and is—a lovely place, with its luxuriant growth of wild flowers and its shimmering lake. But Jesus came to a land where there was no Welfare State, no Health Service of any kind, no pensions; a land occupied by an enemy invader; a land where taxation was very high and fear was on every side. He came to His public ministry conscious of mighty powers latent within Him; conscious, too, of a vast work waiting to be done among a desperately needy people. He came as a great worker—'My Father worketh hitherto,' He

said, 'and I work.' He came as a fighter—never resigned to or acquiescent in the ills which He saw around Him, but prepared to go into battle against the evils of sin, ignorance and disease.

Yet this Jesus, conscious of His powers as healer, preacher and teacher, and with the evidence of His powers all around Him in the healed souls and bodies of His friends, this Jesus used to drop everything and *withdraw*. 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' He withdrew *early*, before the sun was up and the pressure of the day's events was on Him. He withdrew to a *lonely* place, partly because He was vividly conscious of God in nature, and partly, perhaps, because He lived in a crowded home and must needs be alone with God. 'What a waste of time,' we say. He knew better than that. He knew that power drained out of Him as He gave Himself to needy people (*St. Mark* v. 30). So it was that He established a rhythm, a pattern, for His living—withdrawal before work; retreat before attack; renewal before advance.

Nature taught Him the beneficence of that pattern—the recess of the tides before their advance; the sleep of the night before the activity of the day; the inertia of the winter and the opening of the hungry mouth of the fields before the quick and lush growth of spring and summer. And *Scripture* taught Him the blessing of Sabbath rest before six days of toil. He learnt the lesson well.

2. *Proclamation*

'And He said unto them, let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all

Galilee, and cast out devils.' John Baptist's preaching ministry had been silenced by his arrest and imprisonment (i. 14), but the work must go on. Within our Lord there burned a great passion to proclaim the divine word, the only message which would meet the deep need of His hearers. So He heralded the good news of God as Father—love at the heart of the universe; and God as King—law and order at the heart of the universe. Love and law, calling for the answer of love and obedience from God's people. There was a Kingdom to be entered, and its entrance might be missed. There was a heaven to be gained and a hell to be avoided. This was a Man with a message of momentous importance.

And—this is to be noted, for it is in marked contrast to the prophets of the Old Testament and the saints of the Christian era—the Man was Himself central to His message. 'Come unto *Me*,' He cried to the weary and heavy-laden, 'and *I* will give you rest. Take *My* yoke . . . learn of *Me*. . . .' In Him the Kingdom of Heaven had arrived. In Him man faced something greater than law or temple.

3. *Compassion*

The scene recorded in verses 40-45 is one of consummate courage, physical and moral. To touch a leper was not only to incur physical danger, but to defile oneself in the eyes of those who observed the law. But when Jesus was faced with deep human need, caution went to the winds and compassion took over—'He stretched out His hand and touched him'! *People* mattered more than regulations, the mending of broken men and women. To that He dedicated Himself, till they said of Him, 'Himself took our infirmities and bear our sicknesses' (*St. Matt.*

viii. 17). He never quenched the smoking flax, He fanned it to a flame.

Confronted by this leper, there was that within our Lord for which there was no expression in mere words. 'He *touched* him.' There are things which the lips cannot say but the hands can. 'The highest cannot be spoken; it can only be acted,' said Goethe. Hence the whole sacramental principle. Hence the Word becoming flesh, the Incarnation which is the acting out of God's love and grace on the scene of history.

When Ananias, unwilling and fearful, was sent to Saul, who till so recently had been the arch-persecutor of the Christian disciples, before he spoke to him he *put his hands on him*. Only then did he say—and what graciousness there was in the title!—'Brother Saul.' His compassion, like the compassion of the Lord, came through his fingers as well as through his lips (*Acts ix. 17*).

Here, then, was the pattern of the life and ministry of Jesus—withdrawal, proclamation, compassion. This

Was the way the Master trod;
Should not the servant tread it still?

1. *Withdrawal*

'*Withdrawal*? Impossible! We are far too busy! Leave that to the mystics and the contemplatives. It is not for the ordinary Christian.' Are you sure? Or is that the voice of 'our Father Below,' as C. S. Lewis called the devil, who knows that if he can ruin that, all is ruined? The principle is easy to see. It is hard to learn and obey. But the virility of our spiritual life hangs on its observance.

The student and the business man or woman can learn

this by the use of an alarm clock and the expedient of not going to bed too late! For the mother of a young family, where there is little or no help in the home, the problem is much more difficult. But even there, where the early morning demands on her are too clamant to allow of quiet then, she can generally carve out a few minutes, perhaps in the middle of the day, or after the children are in bed, for that withdrawal with her Lord, without which life can become barren, and tempers frayed.

'But what do we *do* in those times of withdrawal?' That is for you to find out and to work out. Apart from the work of intercession, ordered and planned, I would mention two things: *first*, what I would call *exploration*. God is so great, and we little creatures only know the outskirts of His ways. The God of some of us is so small that he is not much bigger than ourselves! But the divine Name (*Exod.* iii. 14) probably means, 'I will become what I will become.' This is the God who increasingly reveals Himself to the reverent explorer. Wonder is akin to worship, and indeed is part of it. 'My God, how wonderful Thou art . . . !'

Secondly, learning to be quiet. We shall never stretch out a firm hand to those who are being battered by the storms of life until we ourselves have learnt to be quiet in the presence of Jesus. The emphasis of the Prayer Book collects on 'passing our time in rest and quietness,' or 'pardon and peace, that they may . . . serve . . . with a quiet mind' is not a selfish emphasis. It is simply echoing the New Testament injunction to come to Jesus, to learn of Him, to take His yoke, and so find rest to our souls. That is the only way to a heart at leisure from itself. And only a person with such a heart can minister to others.

We must pray the old prayer with realism and determination:

Lord, temper with tranquillity
Our manifold activity,
That we may do our work for Thee
With very great simplicity.

So we learn in periods of withdrawal, to press our weakness close to the divine strength; our sin close to divine forgiveness; our ignorance close to divine wisdom; our lovelessness close to divine love; our self-pity close to divine self-giving. We begin to find the secret which Mrs. Wordsworth expressed in the lines:

I smiled to think how God's greatness
Flowed round my incompleteness,
Round my restlessness
His rest.

2. *Proclamation*

'I'm no preacher, and never shall be. I could not preach to save my life.' That may be. But whether you like it or not, you are a herald, a proclaimer of your Lord. All Christian living is proclamatory. By life as well as by lip, if you are a Christian, in touch with your Master, you preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and yourself as the servant of His followers, for His sake. You are the bearer of a message which is the answer to *worry*. I do not find that worry has gone from the average man's life because the Welfare State has made his material existence easier. It is not so easy as that. A man needs to know God as Father before he can find the answer to worry and to fear. You are the bearer of a message which is the answer to *sin*, that radical self-centredness which is the curse of us all, that idolatry which enthrones self and dethrones God from His rightful place, which

stultifies communion with God, and spoils our relationships with others.

3. *Compassion*

It is only another name for love. And love is caring, caring with the deep care of God.

Love has been defined by Bishop Stephen Neill as 'the set of the will for the eternal welfare of another.' Note the stress on will. Love is an affair, not primarily of the emotions but of the will, so that we can *love* someone whom we do not naturally like. And it is directed to the other person's *eternal* welfare. So it may well correspond with the description of a Northern saint which ran like this: 'He was strangely austere, strangely tender; strangely gentle, strangely inflexible.'

For this compassionate living, thank God, there are divine resources available. 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.' The phrase 'shed abroad' is the same as that used in Joel—of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on God's servants. Thus God's compassion comes through the Christian to meet and to succour those who are in need, in loneliness, in distress. Thus gradually and bit by bit the marks of St. Paul's great hymn to love, given us in 1 Corinthians 13, are seen in us, and we become a blessing to others.

Withdrawal, proclamation, compassion—this was the pattern of the life of Jesus. In so far as the Church which is His Body follows that pattern, so far will it continue His work in the world. But let us not be vague and general. That means *you*, doesn't it? And it means *me*.

NEW AND CONTRITE HEARTS

The Right Rev. ARTHUR LICHTENBERGER

'Create and make in us new and contrite hearts.'

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

THIS is our prayer each day in Lent, our prayer to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who does not hate us no matter what we have done or left undone. God who loves us and waits for us to turn to Him. God who forgives all who are penitent and meets us with infinite mercy. God whose mercy is as wide and as vast as the sea.

So think first of this: of God's unfailing love for us, His searching, seeking, saving love. The most familiar picture of this, of course, is in the New Testament, in the Gospel parable of the Prodigal Son. The story begins with the younger of two sons who took the share that was coming to him from his father's estate, and left home to live his own life. He went to a distant country and squandered all he had in extravagant living. There he was. 'He had spent it all,' as our Lord said, 'when a severe famine fell upon that country, and he began to feel the pinch. So he went and attached himself to one of the local landowners, who sent him on to his farm to mind the pigs. He would have been glad to fill his belly with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. Then he came to his senses, and said, "I will set off and go to my father."'¹

¹ New Testament quotations are from the New English Bible.

Then, as you may remember, he rehearsed what he would say when he got home and stood face to face with his father. Have you ever done that? Not under such extreme circumstances as this, but have you ever turned back to one you had offended, or wronged, with an apology and plea for forgiveness all worked out in your mind—husband, wife, parent, child, friend? Not because you feared the consequences if you said the wrong thing, but because in this effort to mend the relationship you wanted to be sure you said what you really felt. Well, this was what the younger son did. He planned exactly what he would say when he walked in the door, ‘Father, I have sinned, against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.’ So prepared, he got up and went to his father.

But the homecoming did not work out according to plan. For while the son was some distance off, his father saw him. He was not only waiting for him, looking for him, anticipating his return, but when he saw him a long way off his heart went out to him, and he ran and kissed him. The son began his prepared speech, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son.’ But his father interrupted him and said to the servants, ‘Quick! Fetch a robe, my best one, and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us have a feast to celebrate the day. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.’ And the festivities began.

Then we meet the elder son who was working in the field. When he heard music and dancing he was angry, and would not join in the celebration. And right here

is the point of the parable. It is found in the contrast between the way the father welcomed his son, and the way the elder brother turned his back on him. When this son, who was at work, heard the noise, and knew what it meant, he was angry and would not go in. There is the contrast. In the father, compassion, mercy, love: 'This son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.' In the elder son, self-righteousness, cold calculation, hardness of heart: 'You know how I have slaved for you all these years; I never once disobeyed your orders; and you never gave me so much as a kid, for a feast with my friends. But now that this son of yours turns up, after running through your money with his women, you kill the fatted calf for him.'

In that contrast Jesus tells us what God is like. He is not, He cannot be, like the elder son, He is like the father, the father who did not wait until his son had recovered completely in mind and body, until all the traces of his evil living had been removed, until he had proved himself worthy of love. He ran out when he saw him coming, he embraced him, he brought him into the house. He did not wait for him to change his ways, he took him as he was.

So God loves you. This is the amazing thing. As St. Paul wrote, 'Christ died for us while we were yet sinners.' 'Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man: And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried.' There is no limit to the love and mercy of God.

This we must believe, otherwise we cannot open our hearts to Him, we cannot be penitent, we cannot give

ourselves to Him. This conviction about God's mercy is, of course, a matter of faith. To believe that God gave Himself for us while we were sinners, that He loves us as we are, and wants us to come to Him as we are, this conviction is not based on feeling, on what is called religious experience. God is merciful, full of compassion. This is His nature, and His nature is always to have mercy and to forgive. Whatever your failings, whatever your experience, believe and know that you can in complete openness as you turn to God say, 'Create and make in me a new and contrite heart.' And God will most surely hear you. For this is the basic prayer, not only for Lent but for all time, the prayer of humility, the prayer of the creature, the enthronement of our Lord and Saviour.

And what happens when we do this? Everything is changed from that moment. When we are truly penitent, when we turn to God, claiming nothing for ourselves, when we say, 'Lord have mercy upon me,' we are in a new world. We have turned from ourselves to God. We have put ourselves in His hands; we have entered into that relationship in which life has meaning.

Yet in another sense we are very much the same as we were before. The perceptible changes in our lives come only gradually. When we pray, 'Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,' surely we do not expect that from then on we are going to be completely honest, forgiving, always loving, without envy or pride or selfishness. The converted Christian must be converted over and over again. We are not disobedient, rebellious children on one day, and then by prayer, or an act of obedience, or even by the grace of God transformed into faithful servants the next day. We are each day God's obedient—dis-

obedient children. There is that civil war in us that Jeremy Taylor knew: 'I am not a man, I am a civil war.' And St. Paul, 'The good which I want to do, I fail to do; but what I do is the wrong which is against my will; and if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who am the agent, but sin that has its lodging in me.' The Christian is at the same time both a righteous man and a sinner. He has been accepted by God, but at the same time he is unworthy. To turn to God, then, asking for the gift of a new and contrite heart, means that we see ourselves as we are, sinners, yet accepted by God, as His children. It means that we desire to live as God's children, to grow up in all things unto Christ. It means each day to put away the old and unrepentant self and put on the new life which God gives us.

It is like the marriage relationship. A man and a woman stand before the altar to be joined together in Holy Matrimony. At the close of the service the minister says, 'I pronounce that you are man and wife,' and while this is so yet that relationship has just begun. It must be worked out, achieved through experiences of joy and sorrow, of pain and failure and acceptance and forgiveness. Throughout their lives the man and the woman are building, shaping their marriage. The relationship is not a ready-made thing, it cannot be taken for granted.

So with our sonship to God, we dare not take it for granted. We have been reconciled to God by Christ, not by a mechanical, impersonal act, but by God giving Himself in love. Therefore this is a personal relationship into which we must enter. We are God's children. The Christian all his life long is striving to become what he really is.

This, then, is the double call of Lent. First, to put our whole trust and confidence in God's mercy, to turn to Him as we are, believing that He is waiting for us, not to condemn, but to forgive and restore. We shall, therefore, bring ourselves consciously again and again into His presence both in the worship of the Church and in our own personal prayers. We shall participate in the services of the Church regularly, hearing the word of God, confessing our sins, receiving the assurance of God's forgiveness, partaking of the sacrament of our Lord's life, that so through these means of grace Christ's own life may be built up in us. We do this, of course, not as separate, isolated individuals, but as members of His Body. It is as Church, as the people of God, that we know and experience God's forgiveness and grace.

Then, secondly, knowing that we are God's children, we do our best to live as His children. We see each day as an opportunity of offering our wills to God, however imperfect that offering may be, and we say 'Thy will be done in us as it is in Heaven.' We do whatever we can in God's name for the people around us.

We do all this not with the idea that we may make ourselves good, and lift ourselves by our own efforts to that place where we are worthy to enjoy fellowship with God. This is unnecessary, this is impossible. God Himself has come into this world in Jesus Christ. He receives us as His own. Everything we do is our response to Him, whether it be for Him or against Him. And He waits, and will continue to wait, for our thankful response, so that we may live the life that has been given us and know who we are.

THE SEASON OF LENT

The Most Rev. JOOST DE BLANK

'Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?'
ISA. lviii. 6.

I

THIS is the first Sunday in Lent, and the season of fasting and abstinence is only a few days old. Although the practice of Lent is observed much more strongly in Catholic Churches such as the Anglican, the Roman and the Orthodox than in others, of recent years it has been spreading more and more widely in the Protestant denominations too. The observance or non-observance of days and seasons may have raised many a theological dispute, but few to-day would question the psychological value of setting apart a period of time for special training and discipline. We accept it readily in the realm of sport and athletics; if we are wise we shall accept it as readily in the realm of the Spirit and of morals.

It is more than likely that those who have come lately to this practice keep Lent more soundly and more profoundly than those who have inherited it from their parents and their grandparents. We have to admit—and let us be quite honest about this—there are far too many Churchmen whose observance of Lent is a fiddling, trifling thing not worthy the name of self-denial; though we claim that the whole purpose of Lent is a denying of the self so that, more dedicated to God and more in tune with Him, we may celebrate more convincingly and more truly the Resurrection triumph of Easter.

I make no complaint about people who decide to give up smoking in Lent or who bravely resolve to give up sugar in their tea. I do this sort of thing myself—I think it's a sensible moral exercise—but I cannot pretend that I believe that this *by itself* is bringing me nearer to God. It is not too difficult to cut off one or two shoots of selfishness which thrust their way aggressively into our consciousness and yet at the same time to leave the root of that selfishness well established and undisturbed.

The Lent that is worth keeping, the Lenten rule that is worth making, is one that digs right down to the root of the matter, one that helps in the radical redirecting of the will with the result that the whole course of our lives is set more on pleasing God than on enjoying ourselves. It is honestly not much good giving up smoking if your temper suffers as a result; it is worse than useless denying yourself this or that harmless habit if it makes you impossible to live with.

II

If we are going to keep Lent at all, let us keep it seriously, and let these days lead to a more thorough and whole-hearted commitment of our lives to God's service.

Of course I know that there are gross sins of excess which must be forsaken if a man means to take his religion seriously, but I doubt if that sort of man will bother about Lent at all, and he will not be listening to this service. So far as those of us are concerned who really want to live as faithful Christians, I would suggest two pointers to a good Lent. The first is to think more of the positive than of the negative. The second is to think more of my neighbour than of myself.

It is not much use worrying about what little habit or luxury we are doing without unless such a resolution leads to more direct and positive action in God's service. The ordinary churchgoer is probably much more indifferent to the sins of omission than to the sins of commission—and yet it is the lack of charity, the lack of justice, the absence of compassion, the absence of trust that bedevils both our own lives and the life of the world as a whole. What can we do to strengthen our love for God? What will help us to live more in harmony with His will? This is the kind of question we ought to be asking—and answering—as Lent begins.

But it is desperately important to recognize that the fruit of a good Lent is *not* that I should know myself to be a better Christian at its end than at its beginning. Lent is not something merely for *my* comfort and *my* encouragement. It should make me a better instrument of God's peace and of God's love and of His reconciling grace.

Too many Christians are like little Jack Horner sitting each in a corner by himself and enjoying a private little religion of their own. They look at Lent and the Church's demands. They choose one that is not too exacting—and they put in a thumb and pull out a plum and say, 'What a good boy am I.'

III

It is this kind of pettiness that makes decent, ordinary people with no very definite Christian opinions run away from the Church and the practice of the Faith. What the devil do they care that we should think beautiful thoughts—that our consciences are easy because we eat fish on Fridays or renounce sweet cakes throughout Lent?

And they are impatient with good reason—and with

good precedent. The greatest of all the Old Testament prophets had exactly the same idea. He was equally impatient and brusque with this essentially selfish approach. The Church in her wisdom has taken one of his great passages as the Old Testament Lesson for Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Listen to these words:

‘Wherefore have we fasted, do people say, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your Fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the

afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.' [*Isaiah* lviii. 3-11.]

This is the call of Lent to you and to me. And if we were to take it seriously, the blessing and the promise would also apply. How often are we told that we are living on the edge of a precipice, or on the side of a rumbling volcano? People dare not plan ahead or even look ahead. The whole world is in turmoil—the Continent of Africa, that sleeping giant of the nineteenth century, is waking to life and activity in the twentieth. 'But,' says the prophet, 'give yourself to the cause of justice and mercy and you shall establish a society firmly founded for many generations': and he goes on to say, 'you will be known as the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.'

Here we have described for us the moral and spiritual structure by which this world is ordered. And if we want to take Lent seriously we shall take Isaiah's words seriously. This is not something we work out in a private little religious watertight compartment of our lives. This is something that affects the whole of life—the way you earn your daily bread, the life in your home, your political affiliations and activity, your share in the economic life of the community, the social services—everything.

And surely we are not surprised. After all, one of the reasons why we keep Lent is in memory of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness. These were not what we tend to-day to call spiritual temptations—one involved

personal comfort, another the unjust use of power, the third political manoeuvring for His own advantage. And the disciple is not above his Lord.

Yes, the keeping of a good Lent can all be summed up in the words our Lord used to dismiss the devil in the last of His temptations. Jesus says to him: 'Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."' '

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and *Him only* shalt thou serve. To help us to this end is the true purpose of Lent.

THE TEMPTATION

The Right Rev. OLIVER TOMKINS

Text: ST. LUKE iv. 1-13.

THE beginning of Lent is dominated by the symbol of the Temptation, but as it draws on, the symbol of the Cross overpowers it more and more, until at last it stands in the centre, in stark simplicity. But, the Temptation, like the Cross, is not simply a symbol. It only has power as a symbol because of something which first happened in the flesh of Jesus. This Sunday the Gospel speaks of the Temptation, and all through this week the Collect will hammer home those forty days and forty nights and the need for our flesh to be subdued to the spirit.

So—think of our Lord's temptation as it is to be relived by us in Him, that our life may be hid with God in Christ. In that sense, we too are 'led by the Spirit' into these forty days. Let us renew that self-offering to the Spirit. Let the Spirit hold you to it.

The First Temptation

'And He did eat nothing in those days, and when they were completed, He hungered. And the Devil said unto Him, "If Thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread." '

One way in which my Lent at least differs from that of my Lord is that I am not getting really hungry. I confess that I don't even know what it's like—that hunger I've had described to me by those who do know: when the

first faint discomfort turns into a steady gnawing—gives way to no feelings but tiredness, sheer weariness—then slowly the gnawing comes back, and the mind fills with thoughts of food, and saliva runs—and still the gnawing goes on—and on—and all the limitations of a wasted body set in. No—not many of us, perhaps, have known or ever will know, what thousands to-day know, and what millions in Asia never quite escape.

But we are thinking primarily of the Body of Christ, the Church, and of our bodies as in that Body. And the first thing to ask is: Do we ever *meet* this temptation? How often have I heard—and given—sermons on ‘Man does not live by bread alone.’ But may the starving Christ forgive us if ever we say that before we remember that men *do* live by bread.

There are some of you here—wives and mothers—who are less likely to forget this than we, whom you feed, you and your like. You know, you and your like, where business and art and religion would be if there were no regular, and indeed, tasty meals; you know how much time and energy there is left for prayer and praise after everyone has been fed, and the washing-up done, and the children dealt with and the clothes washed and mended. Oh, we all do our little bit, our token payment with coal buckets and a turn at the sink. But, however much we do, it’s likely to remain a token payment; a slight reminder of this basic fact. For we shan’t even begin to share this first temptation with our Lord until we know, if not in our flesh at least with an ever quickened imagination, that men need bread; that they have a right to bread; that Jesus bade us pray for daily bread. Only a Church which knows that men need bread, knows because it has been hungry in the desert, can tell men that bread is not enough. The Church to-day lives in a

desert, crowded with hungry men, demanding bread. And not only because bellies are empty, but because they know bitterly that men who will not give them bread, will not give them anything else; will not trust them as *men*. All over Africa and Asia millions of men are demanding that self-determination which spells self-respect and which only feels secure when you control your own supply of bread. I think it is in this sense that Marxism is Satanic—that it has deluded millions into believing that bread is enough.

What are we learning this Lent about Jesus' victory over the first temptation? We shan't even feel the temptation unless our thoughts and prayers and purses are already on the side of those who ask for bread. Then, what does it mean to dare to go on to say: 'Not by bread alone, *but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*'?

The *Word* of God—a great theme; but I would only say this now. Lay yourselves open afresh to the *creativity* of God's Word . . . 'it shall not return to me empty.' Somewhere in there is what the Church has to offer the world which fights for bread. 'Moi, je parle toujours' Péguy puts into the mouth of God. The desert will often be man's sojourn; bread will always be his need and his right, whether he remembers it in his need or forgets it in his repletion; but always at every stage, the Word that proceedeth from the mouth of God will be needed to bring creative possibilities, to bring new life and deeper meaning into the ceaseless struggle for bread. To attune ourselves to hear that Word is our first responsibility, if we live sufficiently near to Christ in the desert not only to feel the need for bread, but also to know that bread alone is not enough.

The Second Temptation

'The devil showed Him all the nations of the world.' The Devil is a master of generalizations. Often—when I have made large speeches about the state of Christendom—I have been thanked for my masterly survey of the world situation, or for a helpful summary of the history of Israel, or for a brief and lucid exposition of Christian doctrine from gnosticism to existentialism. But it is an uncomfortable tribute. The Devil presented Jesus with a masterly survey of the world situation—in order to point out that it all belonged to Him, but that Jesus could have it—*on terms*.

We have overcome the temptation to buy men by pretending that their real and basic physical needs are their only needs. But now, we must fight with this further temptation to gain men for Christ and His Church by compromising with the *Zeitgeist*, by adapting Christianity to the genuine spiritual aspirations of our time.

The Devil is always whispering to the Church: 'You can have it. The whole thing is waiting for you—if you have the sense to offer men Christianity on the terms which they like. See my success,' says the Devil. 'Now I'm a broad-minded fellow; I don't mind what people call themselves. They can all be Christians if you like. That's what you want, isn't it? And it's so easy. Accept my terms—and it's yours. You've got to advertise—men will believe anything if you tell them often enough. Don't be so old-fashioned. This is the age of Mass Man, isn't it? Well—turn Christianity into a mass movement. Use visual aids and the radio technique; get into television on the ground-floor. You've lost the industrial workers, you say? Get in amongst them—put on overalls; get down the mines. Look at the intelligentsia too—

just learn their jargon about images and archetypes and insist that Christian dogma has got all they are looking for. It's so fool-proof, if only you have the sense to do it. You don't really know your job,' says the Devil. 'You've got to meet men where they are. Find out what they really want—and give it to them.' O God, he's so nearly right. There *is* something in what he says, isn't there? How do we know?

Jesus answered: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.' We worship a *jealous* God.

Good. That's all right. That gets us out of that one. We'll make high demands for a high gospel—tighten up on baptism; be strict about divorce; keep the Church unspotted from the world and 'Hurray for the rigorists!' All we need to do is the will of the One High God and serve Him alone.

And then—perhaps next week in hospital you'll meet a dying man faithfully watched to the end by the mother of his children who happens some years ago to have married another man who left her; you'll meet the man who has been in prison because he was so made that he yearns for men in the way that most men yearn for women; you'll meet all sorts of people who make it not-so-simple to say outright upon every occasion what is the will of the God whom alone we must serve. How do we *know*?

Old Fr. Kelly, the founder of Kelham, once asked a young student, 'Why are we here on earth, boy?' 'To do the will of God, Father.' 'Quite right, my boy.' And then the youngster, tentatively, 'But how do we *know* when we are doing the will of God, Father?' 'Ah! that's just the giddy joke. We never do.'

'The life that I live, I live by *faith* in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'

By *faith*. The Lord our God is known only by faith—we will cast ourselves utterly and only upon Him, trusting Him alone.

The Third Temptation

'That's fine,' says the Devil, 'that's the spirit I admire . . .' And straightway he took Him to the pinnacle of the temple and said: 'Cast yourself down . . . He will give His angels charge of Thee . . . On their hands they shall bear Thee up.'

That is bitter. To have your very trust in God made into a temptation. After all—nothing can hurt us; we are more than conquerors; all things are possible through Him that strengtheneth us; there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. So we can safely take the dangerous course. We can confidently walk the tight-rope path of compromise; balance on the dizzy edge, yes—cast ourselves over—for will not angels bear us in their hands? We need an *heroic* Church; we need to go out into the dangerous places, to experiment, to pioneer, to take risks.

In T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, after easily overcoming temptations to lust of place and power, to popularity and to reputation for statesmanship, Becket fights hardest with the fourth tempter who eggs him on to embrace martyrdom for the glory it will bring—'to do the right thing for the wrong reason.'

Jesus said, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

Aye—there's the rub. We pause, horrified on the top of the pinnacle of the Temple. We were about to tempt God; to try to exploit Him; after all, only to do what *we* wanted. Again Péguy, in *Mystère des Saints Innocents*:

'But I know you; you're always the same. You want to make great sacrifices to me, but only if you choose them. You love making sacrifices—provided that they aren't those which I ask for!'

So—we pause, horrified, at the top of the pinnacle, and then turn round, shamefaced, and come down again—by the stairs.

But that is not necessarily the last word. Though, God forgive us, especially when we are no longer young, it often is. It may be we did not tempt God—but then neither did we obey Him.

Thomas of Canterbury *was* martyred after all. Jesus came back from the desert, but He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Being tempted is exhausting work—when the Devil left Him, angels came and ministered to Him—and the next verse begins: 'Then Jesus came in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.'

We must not evade this time of temptation, with Jesus in the desert. But, as for Him, it is but a prelude to a ministry of obedience. Its effect is not to overcome our enemy once and for all—that it is not in our power, but in His to do. And He has done it.

Its effect is to force us through the depths of being tempted—to know where our only resources lie. This Lent will not have been wasted if, through your struggles and through your failures, through trying to see yourself in the Church as it is in our day, you come face to face with your only resources:

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word . . .'

'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'

'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

Being brought again face to face with our only resources—and that is why we need these struggles in the desert—that we may be more ready to go out with Jesus ‘in the power of the Spirit into Galilee’; in His own time and by His paths, He will take us with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and on through Gethsemane to Golgotha, and on again to the Garden of the Resurrection, where we shall meet Him, who never left us comfortless.

THE TRUE WILDERNESS

The Rev. H. A. WILLIAMS

IT is a pity that we think of Lent as a time when we try to make ourselves uncomfortable in some fiddling but irritating way. And it's more than a pity, it's a tragic disaster, that we also think of it as a time to indulge in the secret and destructive pleasure of doing a good orthodox grovel to a pseudo-Lord, the pharisee in each of us we call God and who despises the rest of what we are.

But this evening I don't want to speak about the disguised self-idolatry which will be practised in our empty churches on Ash Wednesday. For Lent is supposed to be the time when we think of Jesus in the wilderness. And the wilderness belongs to us. It is always lurking somewhere as part of our experience, and there are times when it seems pretty near the whole of it. I'm not thinking now of people being ostracized, or without friends, or misunderstood, or banished in this way or that from some community or other. Objectively, as a matter of actual fact, these things happen to very few of us. Most people's wilderness is inside them, not outside. Thinking of it as outside is generally a trick we play upon ourselves—a trick to hide from us what we really are, not comfortingly wicked, but incapable, for the time being, of establishing communion. Our wilderness, then, is an inner isolation. It's an absence of contact. It's a sense of being alone—either boringly alone, or saddeningly alone, or terrifyingly alone. Often we try to relieve it—understandably enough, God knows—by chatter, or gin, or religion, or sex, or possibly a combination of all four. The trouble is that

these various sedatives can work their feeble magic only for a very limited time, leaving us after one short hour or two exactly where we were before.

As I said, our isolation is really us—inwardly without sight or hearing or taste or touch. But it doesn't seem like that. Oh no. I ask myself what I am isolated from, and the answer looks agonizingly easy enough. I feel isolated from Betty whom I love desperately, and who is just the sort of woman who never could love me. And so to feel love, I think, must be at the same time to feel rejection. Or I feel isolated from the social people who, if noise is the index of happiness, must be very happy indeed on Saturday evenings. Or I feel isolated from the competent people, the success-boys who manage to get themselves into print without getting themselves into court. Or I feel isolated, in some curious way, from my work. I find it dull and uninviting. It's meant—it used—to enliven me and wake me up. Now it deadens me and sends me to sleep. Not, in this case, because I'm lazy, or thinking of to-morrow's trip to London, but because it makes me feel even more alone. Or I feel isolated from things which once enchanted me, the music I play, the poetry I read, the politics I argue about. I go on doing it now as a matter of routine, not in order to be, but in order to forget, to cheat the clock. The L.P. record will take forty minutes if you play both sides, and then it will be time for tea. Or perhaps I've been robbed, robbed of my easy certainties, my unthinking convictions, that this is black, and that is white, and Uncle George was a saint, and what they told me to believe is true and the opposite false, and my parents are wonderful people, and God's in His heaven and all's right with the world, and science is the answer to everything, and St. Paul was a nice man, and there's nothing like fresh air or

reading the Bible for curing depression—fantasies, like children's bricks, out of which I thought I should build my life, and which now have melted into air, into thin air, leaving me with nothing. Out of what bricks, then, I ask in despair, am I to build? Is it to go on always like now, just—to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow—a slow procession of dusty greyish events with a lot of forced laughter, committee laughter, and streaks of downright pain?

But what I've been describing is the true Lent, the real Lent, which has nothing to do with giving up sugar in your tea, or trying to feel it is wicked to be you. And this Lent, unlike the ecclesiastical charade, this sense of being isolated and therefore unequipped, is a necessary part, or a necessary stage, of our experience as human beings. It therefore found a place in the life of the Son of Man. Because He is us, He too did time in the wilderness. And what happened to Him there, shows us what is happening to ourselves. Here, as always, we see in His life the meaning of our own.

What, then, happened to Jesus in the wilderness?

I believe that in the later gospels the story has been written up. It looks to me like a sermon from an early Christian preacher, one of the greatest sermons ever delivered. But, even so, it can't compare with the stark simplicity of our earliest record. Here it is, and in this case at least St. Mark tells us more by being less talkative than St. Matthew and St. Luke. At His baptism in Jordan, the Spirit of God had descended upon Jesus, and in His heart there rang an immediate certainty of being chosen to do great things—'And there came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the

wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.'

If we say this is poetry, we're not saying it's unhistorical, but simply that a bare record of outward events can't convey the truth about man, and so the truth about the Son of Man.

What does the story tell us?

Notice first that it is by the Spirit that Jesus is driven, 'thrown out' is the actual word, into the wilderness, the same Spirit which had brought Him the conviction of being called to do great things. The Spirit is ourselves in the depths of what we are. It is me at the profoundest level of my being, the level at which I can no longer distinguish between what is myself and what is greater than me. So conventionally, the spirit is called God in me. And it is from this place where God and me mingle indistinguishably that I am thrown out into the wilderness. The story of Jesus reminds us that being thrown out in this way must be an inevitable concomitant of our call to God's service. To feel isolated, to be incapable for the time being of establishing communion, is part of our training. That is because, so far, our communion has been shallow, mere pirouetting on the surface. We've come to see its superficiality, its unrealness. Hence, the feeling of loss. The training doesn't last for ever. In fact, new powers of communion with our world are being built up within us. We are being made the sort of people of whom it can be said, 'All things are yours.' But it belongs to the training to feel it will last for ever.

And so, we are tempted of Satan. Tempted to give up, to despair. Tempted to cynicism. Tempted sometimes to cruelty. Tempted not to help others when we know we can, because, we think, what's the use? Tempted

to banish from our life all that we really hold most dear, and that is love, tempted to lock ourselves up, so that when we pass by people feel—'There goes a dead man.' And behind each and all of these temptations is the temptation to disbelieve in what we are, the temptation to distrust ourselves, to deny that it is the Spirit Himself which beareth witness with our spirit. God in us. The water in the bucket of my soul doesn't look like the ocean. Yet every Sunday we affirm that it is. For in the creed at the Holy Communion we speak of the Spirit as He who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified. We say it, but every day we're tempted not to believe it. And this self-distrust conjures up the wild beasts. Sometimes they're sheer terror, panic, which makes us feel about the most ordinary undangerous things—'I can't do it.' Or the wild beasts are the violent rages roaring inside us, triggered off by something ridiculously insignificant—a word, a glance, a failure to show interest in some petty concern. Or the beasts prowl around snarling as envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

This, then, is our Lent, our going with Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. And we might apply to it some words from the First Epistle of St. Peter—'Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice, in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.'

Christ's glory is His full and satisfying communion with all that is. It is the opposite of being isolated. All things are His and He fills all things. This complete communion springs from a love which is able to give to the uttermost, a love which doesn't give in order to get, but

which finds in the act of giving itself its own perfect satisfaction. To love is to give. To give is to be. To be is to find yourself in communion with all about you. And this communion is glory. Christ's glory and yours. You don't have to wait for it until you die, or the world comes to an end. It can be yours now. Accept your wilderness. From the story of the Son of Man, realize what your Lent really means, and then the angels will minister to you as they did to Him. In other words, you'll find moments when giving for love's sake really satisfies you, really makes you feel alive and in contact. And at such moments Christ's glory is revealed, and we rejoice and are glad. We look at the travail of our soul, and are satisfied. Lent, we discover, is Easter after all.

TRUE HUMILITY

The Rev. HENRY CHADWICK

'Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.'—PHIL. ii. 3.

THE quality which we describe as saintliness or sanctity is elusive and baffles exact definition. We can talk round it, but cannot pin it down with precision. We can hardly say more than that we know it when we see it. It takes many different forms and the saints include men and women of all types. Yet there is one universal element in the Christian moral and spiritual ideal which by common consent and on the highest authority Christians have valued at immense price and which is accounted a constitutive element in saintliness. For other virtues do not begin to be virtuous unless they are conjoined with that humility which, in its freedom from self-regard, is inseparable from charity. This humility is the indispensable ingredient of all other virtues taken separately. Without it there is inevitably the *superbia* of human self-regard. It is the particular characteristic of pride that it feeds on the virtues and graces, and that at the same time it is the very negation of love or charity. True humility and love are only distinguishable in thought, never in action.

The humility of which we say this, however, has to be qualified by the epithet 'true.' It is a humility best defined by antithesis to what it is not—namely, those caricatures of humility which constitute so large an obstacle to the acceptance of the Christian faith in the minds of many of our contemporaries.

Humility is all too easily transformed from a constituent element of love to God and our neighbour into an ambiguous quality of character. The mere etymological associations of the word are enough to remind us that in its origin humility speaks of the attitude of the underdog, of the man whose head is bowed to earth in the discreet acknowledgement of his dependence on his powerful patron and master. It is the attitude of the slave or the serf before the autocratic, arbitrary and unpredictable will of the lord of the manor; and in that attitude there is always an irreducible element, in some form or other, of insincerity. In consequence, a humility of this kind is always and invariably suspect. It is the proper object of Nietzsche's torrential invective. For its characteristic note is a cringing servility which hopes to ingratiate itself with superior power by abject grovelling in the dust. There is in this kind of humility no element of love. The slave who lies prostrate before his unpredictable and powerful master is moved not by affection but by fear. If only he were able to carry through a social revolution, he would have his boot on his former master's neck. His self-abasement in the dust is both insincere and self-conscious; it ministers to the increase not of love but of hatred.

In the New Testament there is nothing of this. But it is not to be denied that at some moments in Christian history the danger of distortion has become real. The Church's identification of its cause with that of the Christian empire in late antiquity created problems. Society in late antiquity was acutely class-conscious. It might be tolerable and intelligible for Christians to commend the virtue of humility in a patriarchal or feudal society where the underdog would be consulting no one's interest but his own by thus forswearing his independence.

But in a modern egalitarian society, where everyone is as good as everyone else, where everyone drinks the same beer and plays with the same darts, such a commendation is potentially misleading and may well strike a false note.

On the opposite side there is another ambiguity in a humility which is genuine and sincere and is nevertheless pernicious. For where there is humility that is heartfelt, it may be the expression of an ultimately pathological desire to escape responsibility. It may be rooted in an infantilism which makes us want to run away from it all, because we feel ourselves unequal to the burden and task laid upon us by providence. In short, a humility of this kind, genuine enough as it is, is an instance of arrested development. There is again no element of charity, no ingredient of outgoing love to our neighbour. It is an adolescent, immature withdrawal.

And even after we have distinguished Christian humility from servility and escapism, there remain questions and difficulties. Certain eminent bishops and learned doctors have repeated exhorted the faithful to *practise* the virtue of humility, teaching that special merit attaches to acts of voluntary self-abasement, and therefore drawing up a catalogue of the separate virtues. The exhortation assumes that sincere humility is not excluded by the self-consciousness necessarily attaching to the deliberately chosen act or attitude. In fact, true humility is difficult, if not impossible, to practise. It is like purity: it does not do to think or speak too much about it. We all know how special efforts in self-denial, when undertaken for their own sake, quickly become self-assertion, and we may end by making confession of sin itself a piece of elaborate attitudinizing.

Christian humility needs to be distinguished from any natural attitude and from any ordinary judgement that we may pass upon ourselves. It is radically differentiated from the half-ironic understatements of a man who is aware of his achievements and alludes to them obliquely with a becomingly modest and status-raising meiosis. It goes deeper than the Delphic recommendation 'Know thyself'; for it is more than an acknowledgement of one's natural shortcomings and deficiencies, however grave and numerous these are. This is indeed the classical ideal: to avoid the arrogant presumption which may provoke the envious gods who love setting down the mighty and exalting the weak, and to pursue greatness of soul, magnanimity, free of vulgar ostentation and pretentious airs on the one hand, and of a mean-spirited, banausic attitude on the other, aware of one's limitations but facing life with courage and dignity. To the pre-Christian Greek mind, the term humility, *tapeinotes*, means something highly uncomplimentary, a servility or small-mindedness; and it stands in contrast to the proper recognition of one's own relativity.

The majority of the Church Fathers were unaware of any profound tension between the ideal of magnanimity as set forth in Aristotle's Ethics and the Christian virtue of humility; several of them even claim that humility was known and approved by Plato (Laws 716A) and other classical philosophers, and they clearly differentiate humility from servility. John Chrysostom states roundly that 'there is no humility that does not go with greatness of soul, no pride and vanity which is not an expression of mean-spirited small-mindedness.' There is in this formulation a natural synthesis of classical and Christian ideals; it implies a Christian humanism. At the same time the Christian fathers are aware that humility is intimately

linked with the grace of God, and that in the New Testament it is bound up with the response to God's love in Christ. In recent centuries the ancient synthesis has increasingly tended to break down. The sense of conflict with the Christian ideal has become ever sharper. The thirteenth-century controversy whether humility was really a virtue at all, which became a storm in the academic tea-cup of the University of Paris and resulted from the impact of Aristotle's Ethics, was but a prelude to the great debate of post-Renaissance times. In the general reaction against the world-denying temper of mediaeval catholicism and puritanism, the modern humanist has tended particularly to react against humility. Humility's characteristic cry seems to be 'Miserere nobis'—Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. But the humanist has wanted to affirm a confidence in the power of man to solve his own intellectual and moral problems, his independence of any recourse to external and supernatural aid, his conquest of the world not by withdrawal and escape but by engagement and frontal attack. Humanists have stood critically over against a faith that seems to value meekness and passivity higher than strong action and a mastery of the situation, and that so stresses man's fallen estate as to seem to lay an axe to the root of many noble trees, especially in respect of our ideals of education and the progress of knowledge. The humanist protest is an assertion of the autonomy of the natural life, and for this reason it has often looked for its expression especially to those elements, such as the dance and the drama, which in the past have never fully succeeded in establishing themselves as normal vehicles of religious image and symbol and have therefore retained a predominantly secular character.

With what is affirmed here regarding the values of the natural life the Christian will profoundly agree. It is a corollary of the divine creation, and an acknowledgement of the worth and goodness of the Creator's work. But in that acknowledgement there is also the experience of awe and loving reverence which is indissolubly linked with true Christian humility.

At Quinquagesima, both Collect and Epistle (1 *Cor.* xiii) prescribe for our meditation the central place of charity in the Christian life. True humility is poles apart from either of its caricatures, servility and irresponsible escapism, precisely because it is conjoined inseparably with love. It is a grace given by God, evoked by a due sense of his mercies; and perhaps its nearest natural analogy is the awe and overwhelming humility known by lovers in gratitude for the response of their beloved.

'Charity suffered long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.' Between this and true humility no distinction can be drawn.

THE OBSERVANCE OF LENT

The Rev. J. G. McCAUSLAND, S.S.J.E.

'And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.'—ROM. v. 11.

MY text may not be too familiar for a sermon on the purposes of Lenten Discipline. When I was a boy Lent came much too soon after Christmas, involving mite boxes, more church services, and no candy. About the only arithmetic we did which was not by order of the school teacher was the subtraction which told us how many days were left before Easter Day would free us from the tyranny. There is considerable evidence that the adults held similar views. Easter Monday, each year, marked the halting place in the growth of spirituality. On the other hand, the Bible and the special Lenten book were popular: the Study Group and the Devotional Nights were well attended.

Since World War II the emphasis has shifted. In Canada and the United States Lent comes during the sporting season, and during the peak period of TV and radio specials. It is increasingly difficult to have the organizations reduce their activities and allow the church to be the worshipping community. Clubs and Fraternities have their important programmes during the Lenten period: it is often difficult for their members to emphasize their Christian obligations which interfere with the programme policy of these organizations. So difficult has (what used to be called) Lenten Observance become that one American priest in 1961 suggested that the Church should officially confine the observance to the

last two weeks, i.e. Passiontide. If Lenten Observance is thought about, as an end in itself, this commercial post-Christian world will have its full supply of temptations and frustrations to dampen the ardour of the most sincere Christian.

But is there any need to be discouraged? Not if we view Lent as Christians of the first centuries did. The Church of the first five or six centuries placed the emphasis on Eastertide, i.e. the Resurrection, Ascension and the first-fruits of these, namely, the Coming of the Holy Spirit. In the Middle Ages, meditation and devotion became individualistic and tended to dwell upon the physical and spiritual sufferings of our Lord on our behalf. In this rather lax age, we could do with some healthy reminders about what our Lord has done for us, and how poorly we have repaid Him. But continuous meditation upon the Passion, in its physical and mental side, did tend towards morbidity. It meant often that Easter and Pentecost were together a sort of anticlimax, instead of the central theme of our reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Among the many things for which the Canadian Prayer Book Revision is noted, is the increased emphasis on Eastertide. At the same time Lenten Observance is given a definite but more corporate character. The first four weeks of Lent complete the basic training of the Christian soldier which was begun in the pre-Lenten season; Mid-Lent or Refreshment Sunday provides the final nourishment before our Lord leads us into the battle that is concluded by the Paschal victory. With the arrival of Passiontide, the Church takes up again the mighty Acts of Christ. It has been said that, although the Anglican Communion disclaims any attempt at special doctrines, it holds the Catholic Faith from God's standpoint, not

man's, in the sense that, when we meet for worship we consistently and continually remind God the Father of what His only begotten Son has accomplished and completed for us, i.e. His mighty acts. This is evident in the Canadian Revised Consecration Prayer and the new Proper Preface for Passiontide. In both, the mighty acts of the Incarnation, Atonement, and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit are proclaimed as the method by which we are united with our Divine Lord and made individually and corporately acceptable to God. But you may say: 'What has all this to do with Lenten Observance?' It has much: the Resurrection of the Son of God is the greatest of all great Christian facts. Its purpose is primarily that the world might be restored to God's Sovereignty and that each one of us, in the Body of Christ, might be made worthy of assisting our Lord in the Restoration of man to God. The centre of emphasis must shift from self to Christ, the Origin and Crown of our faith (*Heb.* xii. 2). It will be evident that Christian people have two divine duties: (a) each must use the grace given to make himself more acceptable as a member of the Body of Christ. This is spiritual health, i.e. salvation. (b) Then we must be disciplined members of the Divine Society or Holy Community so that the Captain of our salvation can count on the faithfulness and watchfulness of His soldiers. Surely this is the basis on which all Lenten discipline depends.

If we consider what the Church demands, officially, we may be surprised and chagrined at its inadequacy. We may get the impression that the Passion of Christ was highly dramatic play-acting, rather than sober necessity for a fallen world. What are a few less meals or some meals with fewer courses? Is it not a relief to substitute a short half-hour week-day service for a much more

costly entertainment? We may even talk of stewardship and sacrifice when all we mean is that the wardens and/or the Rector have been very clever in getting those coin-cards and other devices into circulation. Alas! many church people think that they have accomplished a great victory for spiritual values when they have been coaxed into these not-too-hidden money schemes. The extra Service on week-days, the coin-card and 'no sugar in one's tea' hardly begin to represent the Biblical doctrines of Prayer, Almsgiving and Fasting. In Holy Scripture, the art of Prayer involves listening to God, and telling forth our experience of Him, more than a list of wants and needs which we feel God should provide. The giving of alms in the Bible represents the unseen, inconvenient and unbalanced offering of money—unbalanced because our right hand doesn't know what our left hand is about to do. It is obvious that 'alms' does not begin until all obligations are satisfied. The prophet Isaiah (lviii. 5-7) indicated that it was better to fast from sin rather than bin. In former times, lax Anglicans used to welcome this text as an excuse not to obey the laws of the Church. On the other hand some rather surface-minded Church people felt that all was well with their spirituality, if the mechanics of fasting or abstinence were performed. Both sides were wrong: Isaiah's statements call for interior morality and reparation, but a genuine following of external rule would have assisted the progress of spirituality. Our Lord showed us the example by attending the Temple and obeying the Law of Moses. The shallow Christian, obsessed by the niceties of ceremony or gesture, can hardly be the virile soldier of Jesus Christ because of the absence of mortification and reparation in heart and mind.

Perhaps the most common fault, strange as it may

sound, is the making of a Lenten Rule designed to be terminated on Easter Day, or even on each Sunday in Lent. A little thought will show us that this procedure does not make for spiritual progress, but tends to reduce the significance of Eastertide. If we desire greater spirituality, it is certainly useful to make Ash Wednesday a kind of key-point from which to launch our new spiritual flight. Let us make a basic rule, e.g. prayer, almsgiving and fasting with only the necessary detail. Let us keep this rule from henceforth so that the following Ash Wednesday we can build up on the past year's foundation. There is certainly something wrong with a rule of spirituality tried with more or less regularity for forty week-days, and then completely forgotten. Most rules are overbalanced on the personal side: what is needed is a sense of the corporate character of Christianity and the application of Christian Principles and Practices to the daily round and the common task. Recent Lambeth Conferences have greatly assisted the Church by presenting, in general form, 'A Rule of Life.' Lent could be used to begin a reform of Christian Practice according to this Lambeth Rule. Our renewed Prayer Book, in Canada, officially accepts this rule on page 555.

The Anglican Rule of Life is based on two sound principles: (a) its provisions are in accord with the precepts of the Gospel; and (b) the Rule hews carefully to the faith and order of the Church. It is so easy to do good deeds and be kind on the natural level, but the Christian must be supernatural in his duty to his neighbour as well as in his adoration of God. A Rule of Life, below the standard of Christian Practice, as the Church puts it forth in the Prayer Book, really dishonours the Body of Christ because this laxity despises the revelation

which Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles. Our practice should be up to the standard of the Prayer Book.

In conclusion, let us take a brief look at the provisions of this Rule of Life. Regularity at public worship and particularly the Eucharist is put into first place. The adoration of the Triune God is the first duty of the baptized. Private Prayer, Bible-reading and the various forms of self-discipline are in second place. The Prayer Book Rule of Life does not allow us to be exotic and artificial in our religion: the Christian must bring the teaching and example of Christ into his everyday life. Indeed there will be times (frequent enough in these days) when he must be a martyr for Christ, using the word 'martyr' in the original sense of one who bears witness for the faith that is in Him. The layman must take part in the worship, labours and councils of the Church and his community, and he must make an offering of his time, energy and money.

It will be evident that a somewhat negative Lenten Rule arranged to be thrown away conveniently and thankfully on Easter Day, fails to meet the needs of the Christian on his earthly pilgrimage. The Christian's marching orders correspond with his third baptismal promise: to persevere in the same all the days of his life.

SELF-RENUNCIATION

The Right Rev. W. G. H. SIMON

'Baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto Him.'

BAPTISMAL OFFICE, BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

MEN have found many reasons for practising asceticism: it has been a constant feature in very different periods of human history and in all kinds of varying human circumstances, overstepping the bounds alike of civilizations and of religions. Some have practised it because they believed that the material world and particularly their own bodies were somehow infected with evil, needing to be rigidly disciplined and mortified; others because they believed the world was doomed and that the sooner they could learn to do without all its pleasures the better for them. Philosophers have practised it in order to attain a calm and settled reflectiveness of temperament; athletes to win a prize.

The presence of an ascetic world-renouncing element in Christianity is certain; it has been there from the beginning, and no Christian century is lacking in examples of it. But it is in Christianity with a difference. There is no pessimism in the attitude of the Christian to the world; for 'the world was made by God', and 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.' Nor does the Christian despise that whole complex of created things which we may sum up under the term 'the flesh,' for 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' In no sense are self-renouncing or ascetic practices imposed upon the Christian from without; the necessity

for them rests in the nature of the mystical union between Christ and himself, the union brought about by Baptism. Having been baptized, the Christian 'has put on Christ'; having been baptized he is involved in the passion of Christ; his 'marks and his scars he carries with him'; for he has been 'crucified with Christ' and now it is 'no longer he who lives but Christ who lives in him.' As the origin and power of the Incarnate Life lie in the Love, the Charity of God, so the origin and power of Christian practices of self-denial and renunciation lie, too, in the Charity of God, love of God overflowing into love of his world and all that he has made. One may say that self-Renunciation is as intimately and necessarily a part of Christian life and practice as our Redemption by Christ is intimately and necessarily a part of its foundation; Redemption and Self-Renunciation are linked together. Both have their origins in the New Testament, and both have been differently presented in different generations. No particular presentation may claim to be the complete expression of all the New Testament reveals about either; all reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, facets of the truth we see shining there.

When Christianity became 'established' under the Emperor Constantine, the Christian found himself living still in God's world, but in a world which, though redeemed, was far from being consecrated. Too many people had become Christians without counting the cost, and the spirit of a quite unconsecrated world pervaded the Church. Monastic asceticism was the answer to this; to save the world, men must save themselves from it, and be free to serve God, that so they might be free to serve His Creation. This meant, indeed, material renunciations in the matter of food and comfort and sleep, but not the extravagant mortifications that were

later to emerge. These early ascetics were very sensible and much concerned with Prayer and Work and Silence. The Prayer was very much associated with and wrapped up in the Word of God in Holy Scripture; and the Work was a practical necessity; they were not prepared to live *on* the world they were renouncing; they would work so as not to be a burden to others, and that they might serve others by their liberal charity.

Now let us make a rapid journey through the centuries, as it were in a time-machine of our own invention. Standing at the entry to the Middle Ages we see Saint Benedict drawing up his famous Rule with work and prayer and charity and silence as its prevailing themes, a Rule full of common sense, free from the extravagances to which his Celtic contemporaries were sometimes given, and yet very demanding, capable of producing in those who followed it the greatest sanctity. Later the commanding figure, if we can speak of so humble and gentle a character in such terms, was that of Saint Francis of Assisi, called amongst growing comfort and even luxury of living, to follow Christ in His poverty and His sufferings. But the Franciscan flowering for all its beauty is too brief; the Middle Ages begin to decline; and when they finally break up, monasticism is involved with the rest of Western Christendom in the general anarchy. Now we see the Church face to face with the New Learning, and all that we mean by the Renaissance. Man and his achievements occupy the centre of the stage; people look back more and more to the great pagan pre-Christian humanists. They still aim at perfection, but it is in human and not supernatural terms that they now think of it, and Christian asceticism reflects this change; it is valued more and more as the ideal way of reaching one's full development as a man. It is a time of systems and

techniques for discovering the inmost workings of the soul, of pessimism about human nature. But it is also a time when the secular clergy and the laity come into the picture, when the ascetic life leaves the cloister for the court, and lives spent in the great world are yet marked by great austerity and restraint. The compilers of the systems and techniques, and those who carried them out, really loved God, and union with Him in Christ was their aim; it is salutary to remember that Saint Francis de Sales compiled his *Introduction to the Devout Life* for a girl at one of the most corrupt of French Courts. But they reflect the tendencies of their times; the old deep concern with Liturgical Prayer is missing; asceticism has become a special kind of life; daily life is no longer seen as itself ascetic.

The same defect persists when the Renaissance has spent its force and we move into a very different period, anti-intellectual, intensely individualistic, a period of self-sought sufferings, strange disturbing mortifications and extraordinary penances, of individual suffering accepted as somehow of merit in itself, of private and often sentimental devotions of many kinds. Unfortunately, it is this kind of asceticism that still represents to most people what they understand by Christian austerity and self-denial, and it is not surprising that with the deeper understanding we now have of the hidden springs of too many penances and mortifications, the twentieth century has witnessed a sharp reaction against asceticism of any kind. Yet the seeds of recovery were soon planted and a way of renewal pointed out, for into this unhealthy atmosphere came the common sense of people like Saint Theresa of Lisieux, like a fresh breeze into an over-scented room. For them, Charity once again throws into relief the ascetic opportunities of man's daily work, and

links them up, through the Liturgical Revival, with the sanctification of daily life through the Word of God in the Prayer of the Church. The Christian performing day by day, and so far as Saint Theresa was concerned minute by minute, the duties of his calling, giving himself to others all the time, is truly ascetic, whether he is a monk or not. We detect the spiritual kinship with John Keble, who lived by the Liturgy of his Church as vividly as did any desert Father, and sees his opportunities of self-denial around him every day.

We need not bid for cloistered cell
Our neighbour and our work farewell;
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For mortal man beneath the sky.

The trivial round, the common task
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

From The Christian Year

For most of us in our times it is along these lines that the call to deny ourselves and to follow Christ must be answered. To accept what comes to one day by day, with the certainty of mortification that comes with it, to have a grievance and not to talk about it, to involve oneself sincerely in repentance as connected with it all; these may have no dramatic value—and no one will deny that the dramatic has its value in this as in all other aspects of human life—but they will be at least as difficult to achieve and at least as rewarding in the surrender of the whole self to God in love, which must be the aim of all true asceticism.

There is here a danger, particularly when the Church is as involved with the world as it is to-day. The danger is that asceticism should take on 'purely spiritual' forms, and be as it were 'interior.' The danger may be seen

in small ways in much of the attitude of Anglican post-Tractarians towards Lent, in their deprecation of acts of self-denial, or of the surrender of this and that small pleasure or indulgence, to which our fathers were so much given. Instead, we are told we must practise a 'positive' Lent; we can go on just as usual, simply placing more emphasis on prayer and the things of the spirit and so forth. As Père Bouyer has caustically said, 'The renunciation is interior: you keep what you renounce and you renounce it while you keep it.' This seems like the kind of spirituality which Saint Paul so strongly denounced, which held that the material world is a matter of indifference to the purely spiritual man. We must reply that the material is of immense importance to the spiritual and we must emphasize that it is impossible really to renounce a thing without actually giving it up. It is good to hear the point driven home by so twentieth century a preacher as Dr. Vidler in a sermon on Prayer and Godly Discipline:¹ 'The main point about fasting is that self-indulgence always needs to be checked and restrained; for when it is unrestrained it corrupts and deadens the sensitivity of the soul. . . . Fasting, self-discipline, self-denial, even in little things, brace and strengthen the whole texture of a man's personality and so make him better able both to watch and to pray.' It is from this point of view that Christians must regard self-sacrifice for others; it is from this point of view that they must look at their attitude towards gambling, tobacco, drink, and other social questions of the time where all of us are involved, and so much waste and so much sorrow follow for so many.

We have already briefly noted in passing, the part played by Silence in the ascetic teaching of Saint Bernard and his

¹ *Windsor Sermons*, S.C.M. Press, 1958.

predecessors. Here to-day join hands, though from different starting points and with different aims, such unlikely allies as Mr. Lewis Mumford and the Dominican authors of *Christian Asceticism and Modern Man*.¹ 'In throwing open our buildings to the daylight and the outdoors,' writes Mr. Mumford in his book *The Culture of Cities*,² 'we will forget at our peril the co-ordinate need for quiet, for darkness, for inner privacy, for retreat. . . . Without formal opportunities for isolation and contemplation, even the most externalized and extroverted life must eventually suffer. The home without such cells of quiet is but a barracks: the city that does not possess them is but a camp.' 'As the world is threatened by herd instinct and the pursuit of action for action's sake,' write the Dominicans, 'these must be countered by the building of individual worlds of recollection and silence so as to allow of thought and prayer, for as Lacordaire says "Silence is the homeland of the strong."' One of the most hopeful signs of our times is the growth of the Retreat Movement with its emphasis on silence and withdrawal, not in the sense of retreat, but rather of a return to the fortress for the refurbishing of one's armour before one goes out again strengthened for the battle. We in Anglicanism are as yet far from taking it seriously enough; even amongst the clergy the need for silence is but scantily recognized, and it is probably not too much to say that amongst most lay people there is hardly any awareness of it at all. Yet few things are likely to be more beneficial to our work for God and man than greatly increased numbers of men and women who have learnt withdrawal from the noise and stress of twentieth-century life. They listen to the Voice of God in the

¹ Blackfriars Publications, 1955.

² Secker & Warburg, 1958.

stillness of Retreat, that like John Inglesant's friar,¹ they may learn 'amongst ten thousand times ten thousand to know Him, and amid the tumult of a universe to hear the faintest whisper of his voice.'

Our Work, our Prayer, our Silence provide us with the material on which in Lent we may examine ourselves as to our share in the life of self-denial and sacrifice which are part of our Christian calling, which is, 'to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto Him,' as we go about our daily duties in 'that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us.'

¹ J. H. Shorthouse, *John Inglesant*. Macmillan, 1924, p. 400.

A FORWARD-LOOKING LENT

The Right Rev. and Right Hon. R. W. STOPFORD

'With all these witnesses to faith around us like a cloud, we must throw off every encumbrance, every sin to which we cling, and run with resolution the race for which we are entered.'—HEB. xii. 1.

CHRISTIANITY is an historical religion. We believe—and our belief is firmly rooted in the Bible—that at certain times, which can be dated, God has acted in a clear and decisive way. Above all, and this is central to our Christian faith, we believe that in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ God broke into history 'for us men and for our salvation.' But our faith is also that God still acts. So it is that Christianity, though rooted in history is also essentially forward-looking. We respect and value tradition because it gives us a firm and secure starting-point for fresh endeavour. Yet, on the other hand, we cannot be satisfied with mere tradition because we believe that the Holy Spirit is always leading us into fresh understanding of truth in its fullness.

We can apply this in many ways, but it has a particular application to Lent. By tradition the season of Lent is a time for self-examination and self-discipline. But if we keep Lent in this way only because it is traditional to do so, if we 'give up some things for Lent,' as the saying is, only as a traditional token, it is extremely unlikely that it will do much good to us or to anyone else. But we can keep Lent in a forward-looking way, and that is surely what God means us to do. In Lent we think particularly of our Lord's temptations—but those temptations all look forward to His Ministry and His Cross,

and if we try, in Lent, to follow Jesus into the wilderness we must be looking forward to our own discipleship and ministry.

Jesus was tempted to use wrong means in his Messiahship, and we all experience the same kind of temptation when we try to live our lives as Christians. The first temptation was to put material things first in His affection—to use spiritual power to turn stones into bread. But spiritual power cannot be used in that way without ceasing to be spiritual. The next temptation was to draw men to Himself by a display of spiritual power. But spiritual power is not for display. The last temptation was to use the wrong means to attain the right end, and we are very often, in various ways, exposed to that temptation in our daily occupations. We need to remember, what Jesus said so emphatically, that God alone can be the object of worship and that if we use the wrong means we cannot attain the right end.

Again and again Jesus taught this same lesson. He attacked the Pharisees because they fasted for the sake of fasting and because they tried to win popular approval by appearing to fast. Our Lord tells us to fast—indeed He assumes that we will—but He tells us also to hide from other people what we are doing. He bids us to fast and to discipline ourselves in order that we become spiritually more fit and better able to do God's will—and for no other purpose. The Collect for the first Sunday in Lent picks up the same lesson—'Give us grace to *use* such abstinence . . . that we may ever obey Thy godly motions.' There is a very short prayer which many people find it helpful to use all through Lent which has the same emphasis: 'Lord help us to be masters of ourselves that we may be the servants of others.'

Involved in the idea of fasting and abstinence and self-control must be a realistic appraisal of our own sins and shortcomings. Unless we are honest enough with ourselves to know where we fall short we cannot serve God or our neighbour as we should. Part of our Lenten self-denial must, therefore, be self-examination. But it is very easy to make this backward-looking rather than forward-looking, to dwell so much on our own sinfulness that we become morbidly preoccupied with it, instead of searching out our sins in order that through repentance and faith we may conquer them.

The passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews which I took as my text makes this same point. With the support of the faithful of the past who as witnesses surround us like a cloud we are to throw off every encumbrance and like an athlete preparing for a race we must get rid of everything which gets in our way like the sins to which we cling—in order that we may run with resolution the race for which we are entered. The test of everything we do in Lent then is whether it is forward-looking, and whether it will help us to run the race better or not.

The negative attitude of doing without something in Lent has its value as a kind of self-imposed discipline. But if we emphasize this attitude too much we can easily produce the wrong result. I would like to suggest, however, that it is far better to have a positive discipline. Instead of doing without something—to *do* something we know we ought to do but do not like doing. It is far more than just playing with words to suggest that it is better for us to say 'I will be good-tempered' than to say 'I will try to stop being bad-tempered.' It is better to force ourselves to unselfish actions than merely to curb our selfishness.

And just because our Lenten discipline is not to be for ourselves alone—not merely to save our own souls—but that we may do God's will more effectively, it is very important that Lent should be a season of corporate discipline also. Every congregation has a corporate responsibility within the society in which it is set. We have the responsibility of being ambassadors of Christ—commending our faith and our worship by the quality of our lives and the reality of the worship we offer to God. So we have to examine the life of the congregation as a corporate body. Is the P.C.C. always on its guard against yielding to the temptations which Jesus faced in the wilderness? Is there a fellowship in the congregation in which we do really regard ourselves as members one of another, in honour preferring each other. Do we within it find it easy to speak the truth in love? Are we showing to other people the outward signs of the Body of Christ which the Church claims to be?

Then we must make our corporate resolutions—to be more faithful in worship, to be more sensitive to the needs of others within the fellowship and outside, to be more ready to accept personal responsibility both within the family of the Church and within the society for which we live. That is the race for which we are entered, and for which we must always be in training.

But even that we cannot do by ourselves. We must know where we are trying to go and the writer of Hebrews in the words which follow my text gives the answer: 'Our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom faith depends from start to finish.'

LENTEN PATIENCE

The Most Rev. G. O. SIMMS

'In your patience possess ye your souls.'—ST. LUKE xxi. 19.

LONG and testing was the time of our Lord's wandering in the wilderness. There He was alone with Himself and His thoughts, hungry and tired. Just at that point and in that condition temptation confronted Him, recommending an end to the tedium of waiting and the long period of preparation.

Yet He was ready for the tempter, armed with the words of faith. Apparently vulnerable, from bodily weakness and weariness, Christ had been found spiritually fit and all the more firmly fixed in the habits of obedience to the will of His Father.

The Christian Church in her wisdom has appointed long periods of preparation to precede the short festival seasons. In the drawn-out, bleak days of spiritual training are laid the foundations of such lasting qualities of the spirit as endurance, patience and acceptance. Perhaps in her wisdom also, the Church has assigned without a major festival a lengthy and somewhat unrelieved portion of the year to a series of Sundays after Trinity. For our own lives are, for the most part, marked by a fair measure of monotony and uneventful routine. It is true that there are special occasions, those sparkling moments of achievement and rejoicing; but often these have had for their prelude long and anxious times of effort, of suffering, of compulsory and voluntary discipline. Misleading are those headlines in the press which suggest that something

sensational and newsy happens to us every day. In point of fact, there is very little in the lives of most of us which is worth printing. Even in a world crisis, while the few make the news, the many are occupied, admittedly at a quickened pace, with preparations, anticipations, and the strains of waiting.

Those who live in the faith of Christ learn gradually how to use their days, not caring in the long run whether they are times of excitement or drab routine. Their lessons are learned in the school of patience. Christ Himself provides the outstanding and unblemished example of patience. It might be said that He minted the word, for ever since He used it, its value and influence have become quite distinctive.

The patience of Christ, so closely linked with His obedience and humility, was no colourless, lifelessly passive, sluggish submissiveness. It was more like a weapon which He unsheathed to reveal His purpose, wielded as He exercised His will at a definite single moment.

He was tempted by the Tempter. Yet for each temptation He had an answer from the Scriptures. He was assailed with suggestions which concerned the world and the winning of it, the plans nearest to His heart; yet with words which sound impatient He makes His decision with finality: 'Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' These words sound impatient, but in reality they are deeply patient. Patience does not mean docility and meekness, but steady purposefulness and resolution to live to the end, faithful and unflinching.

Yet, hard on Himself, Christ was wonderfully lenient towards the faults of others. Loving even those who betrayed Him, He loved them to the end. Not that there

was in His patience any spirit of compromise, any temporizing, but more because with a firm resolve to be faithful to the end, come what may, He paid little attention to His own feelings, even if injured by foe or friend. Patiently he sought to do His Father's work with a devotion which would not grow cold when rejected, but would redeem.

When St. Peter, denying his Lord at the blazing fire in the hall, said, 'Woman, I know Him not,' the rejoinder from Jesus was not a self-regarding 'I told you so.' We read differently that 'the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord.' Here was redemptive patience at work, for the eye of Peter's Lord 'lightened his darkness,' and he went out and wept bitterly.

Such was His patience towards His friend. On the Cross He was patient with His enemies. He did not make light of the agonies of crucifixion: the cry 'My God, My God' makes this sufficiently clear. A strong patience shone through the scene of hate and persecution. In the face of the opposition, the jealousy, the petulant impatience of the men who crucified Him, Jesus did not feebly acquiesce. He showed an active positive love as He prayed and went on patiently praying 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Helpless in hands and feet, He Himself was in control of the ugly situation.

The whole Bible presents in its different portions the tale of patience seen as endurance and purposeful action under the providence of Him who is boldly called 'the God of patience.' In the Authorized Version of the Old Testament not once is the word 'patience' mentioned, not even in the Book of Job. Only three times does the word occur in the Gospels; significantly enough, in the

later books of the New Testament it appears some forty-five times. The writers of the early Church looked back over the shattering events of their lifetime's experience, the Birth, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of their Lord and Master, and understood in terms of a very wonderful and unusual patience the story of God's dealings with men and women. As they pondered on the patience of their Lord they prayed that this spiritual quality might mark their own lives.

The disciples and friends of Christ had been characteristically impatient. They had sought for signs, they had asked fire to come down from heaven to vindicate the righteous cause. They had eagerly expected a second coming in their own lifetime. Ultimately they learned the lesson of patience. In the last book of the Bible with its background of imperial persecution, we read more than once of 'the patience of the saints' and perceive in the phrase the note of victory.

Pointedly enough the word 'patience' appears at the close of the explanation of the parable of the sower. The Word which is the seed does not show itself above the surface all at once, but keeps its worth hidden, to germinate and to bring forth fruit with patience, in due course, in ground well prepared. In spite of the miracles, there was little that was spectacular or sensational in Christ's life. His humility and spiritual power were great reserves upon which those who stayed with Him learned to draw. These reserves the crowds which passed by failed to notice. Yet the fruit of His life, lived with its disappointments and its pathetic immediate results, undoubtedly ripened and became far more bountiful by this slower and more mysterious method of hidden progress.

We might ask quite justifiably why God should bring the good news of His love for us in this strange and complicated guise. Why do we hark back to Abraham and the promised land, to Moses and the Exodus, to the story of a people in captivity, and to the expectation of a Messiah? Then why was Palestine chosen as the scene of the life of Jesus? and why a crucifixion? Are there not simpler and less ambiguous ways of making God's will known? Would not a more obviously probable and more patently victorious message have rescued the world from its predicaments and multiplied the number of believers, ten and twenty times over?

The key to the answer to queries of this sort is to be found in the patience of the patriarchs and the prophets, in the patience of Jesus, and in that strange blend of love and suffering which we find repeatedly in the lives of the heroes of the Christian Church in both ancient and modern times. Biblical patience is distinctive: it did not appear to mark the life of the Greek and the Roman who did not always see the point in enduring to the end; neither was this kind of patience practised by the world-denying Far-eastern mystic. Biblical patience was not the kind to sit on a monument. Consider two examples from the Old Testament from the lives of Jacob and Job: at first we are faced with something akin to impatience.

'Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife . . . and it came to pass in the evening that Laban took Leah his daughter and brought her to him. And Jacob said to Laban, What is this that thou hast done unto me? did I not serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore hast thou beguiled me?'

However, in spite of his impatient tone, he perseveres, and both his place in history and his function among the chosen people are maintained through the vicissitudes, wrestlings, deceptions and conflicts which we associate with this colourful patriarch.

Job also is patient in the sense that he endures to the end with fortitude, with faith unimpaired. Yet the language he uses when bewailing his lot is scarcely that of the calm Stoic or of the ascetic trained to a life of resignation:

‘After this, opened Job his mouth and cursed his day, and Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born. Why is light given to a man whose way is hid and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters.’

‘In your patience possess ye your souls.’ This sentence was uttered while our Lord outlined a future that was dark and uncertain. There was urgency in his message, but not the urgency of panic. For the patience which is informed by faith and issues in purpose belongs to a chain-series of spiritual moods:

tribulation worketh patience
and patience, experience,
and experience, hope.

This is the pattern of our lives, the mirror of our soul’s pilgrimage.

If we face the forty days patiently, entering into the experience of the whole Church with dedication and whole-heartedness, we shall find strength in the length of Lent. As the weeks of the penitential season progress, we will do well to have a mind not only to abstinence from the little luxuries, but also to a practice of fresh

thinking and further reading. From ancient times it has been a godly custom in Lent to seek to kindle in the soul a special yearning for the things of God.

Such things are imparted slowly even to the most responsive. The great Leo in the fifth century made reference in his Lenten sermons to the importance of receiving biblical and doctrinal instruction amid the pressures of a hostile world. Baron Friedrich von Hügel put the point in another way. In one of his famous letters to his niece, he announced that he was going to give up buying books—and hothouse fruit—for Lent. He proceeded, however, to furnish the same niece with a formidable reading list for her own spiritual profit during the forty days. Her uncle added, 'I want to prepare you, to organize you for life, for illness, for crisis and death.'

Lenten reading should have about it something of that large purpose outlined by the Baron without slavishly copying his somewhat alarming programme. At a difficult stage in the long, lean season when spirits are flagging, meditative, patient reading can rescue us. Reading, story-telling, conferences, or 'collations' have for long been Lenten activities. In the old days, a young Christian disciple would often turn from his reading of the Scriptures to a more experienced brother in the faith and say 'Give me a word by which I may live.' Spiritual problems and their solution were handled in this way by the early Christian fathers in the desert and elsewhere. Through reading and meditating and special study of one particular aspect of the Faith, Christians sharpened their spiritual vision and deepened the longings of their hearts.

If anyone is in doubt about the importance of the place of patient thought and of unhurried meditation in the ordering of life, the famous introduction written by Helen

Waddell for her *The Desert Fathers* should be consulted. In a classical statement upon the contemplative life, she has penetrating things to say about the athletes of God, and also about the record-breaking athletes of our own day. As she writes she throws light upon the capacity for spiritual training displayed by members of such an enterprise as a Polar expedition, upon the inner power which inspires the labours of such a one as the beloved physician of Lambarene or of that Nobel prizeman-priest who has at the moment a deep concern for the 'heart of Europe.' Both the ancients and the moderns have needed for their total well-being in a life of active dedication a forty-day long sojourn in a desert place.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

The Rev. J. E. FISON

THE story in St. Luke xi. 14-28 may be confusing, but the good news contained in it for the Third Sunday in Lent is crystal clear. There are three things which can block communion with God and so hold us back from the life God would have us live. They can all be removed and cleared out of the way if we will let Jesus' message in the Gospel for to-day have its way with us.

The first obstacle is pure prejudice. So many of us prefer to live with blinkers over our eyes, rather than face the gospel of the painful eye-opener that Jesus offers. We prefer to go on wearing our family blinkers, or our national or ecclesiastical blinkers, rather than face life squarely for ourselves. It is so much more cosy to let others hold the reins and guide us, but Jesus wants us to stand on our own feet and walk by our own insight and learn if necessary by our own mistakes. There is not a trace of any false paternalism about Him. As John Oman used to say, the gospel is not so much a crutch as a spur—a spur to face new facts, however unpleasant and unpalatable they may be.

We want to live a life of our own choosing. But true vocation means finding the life that God has chosen for us. Perhaps, like the Jews, we are quite willing to put questions to life; but perhaps, also like them, we are not so willing to face up to the questions life puts to us. We want to live on a one-way street of our own selection—

whether of giving, if we profess to be Christians; or of taking, if we make no such profession. We are not so anxious to live on the two-way street of reciprocal giving and taking, which is where God has placed us. The truth the Jews needed to hear and receive was staring them in the face, if only they would recognize it.

But when Jesus confronted them with the new facts recorded in the Gospel for to-day, they accused Him of working 'through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.' They refused to allow for the possibility that God might be working where they did not think He normally worked and in ways different from those He normally used. It was because in the end they refused the gospel of the painful eye-opener that they crucified Him; they preferred darkness to light.

And who are we to blame them? As Plato knew so well, if our eyes have become used to the darkness, it is very painful to look at the light. But that is what we must do. New facts must be faced and not denied by prejudice, or misinterpreted by ignorance, or distorted by malice. If we face them, we shall find new insights into the gospel of our heavenly Father. He is no fool. As George Adam Smith used to say, He also is reasonable. 'Come now,' he says, 'and let us reason together'—about all the things that are so disturbing. There is no need to fear new truth, but there is no denying the pain of the eye-opener that is inevitable as soon as we take our blinkers off.

But there is more to the Gospel for to-day than just this. The trouble is not only that we live in cosy blinkers, but also that we rely on false securities, and we do not like the gospel of the painful disturber of our peace. But this is exactly the prescription Jesus has to give to so many sick people, if they are to get well. The prophets of the Old Testament warned the people again and again

against 'Peace, peace, where there is no peace,' and Jesus said that He came 'Not to bring peace, but a sword.' We want to keep our securities in peace. God wants to break in on the false peace of our house and so help us to find the true peace of security in reliance upon Him alone. That is the point of Jesus' remarks about the strong man whose 'goods are in peace' until 'a stronger than he shall come upon him.' Jesus is the stronger than the strong.

We can see what the sword He said He had to bring meant in His own life. It was a sword that He wielded that pierced Mary's heart. He could not do His Father's will without breaking His mother's heart; and so it was also with His mother-church and His mother-land. It was the agony, not so much about what He was going to suffer the next day, as about what He was going to cause His friends to suffer that almost broke Him in Gethsemane. The false securities must go if the true security is to be found. But they are not given up without agony.

The dearest idol I have known,
What e'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

There can be no dodging of this cross if we are to know the gospel of the Son. 'Some of us would have Christ cheap, but the price will not come down' (S. Rutherford).

But there is even more than this in the Gospel for to-day. It is not only cosy blinkers and false securities that keep us from the life of true communion with God; it is also futile and fatuous piety; and Jesus has something to say about this too. His gospel is not only a painful eye-opener and a painful disturber of the peace; it is also a painful deflater of false piety. How many of our

lives are like the house 'swept and garnished,' which provided such a splendid home, not only for the one devil who had been turned out of it, but also for the seven others whom he got to join him when he re-occupied it! Jesus found the life of so many religious people in His day a vacuum, a vacuum that many people imagine is a holy thing, until they remember the dynamic meaning of true holiness as Jesus demonstrated it.

So often Lent provides just such a holy vacuum. We have cleaned out a devil or two on Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, only to provide far better premises for other devils to occupy during the rest of Lent. Against all false and merely conventional piety, Jesus set His face like a flint. 'Creative living is on the yonder side of convention' (Jung), and unless we are prepared to venture out on this yonder side, it would have been better if we had not started off with any conventional clean-up at the beginning of Lent at all. That is the terrible secret of the gospel of the Holy Spirit.

What then is required of us? The last two verses of the Gospel make this clear. False piety is not only futile; it is also fatuous; and so often it takes the form of fatuous noises. A certain woman seems to have thought she would have liked to have been Jesus' mother. She little knew! But Jesus did, and He had no use for the sentimental platitudes which so often mask an unconscious hypocrisy. The Gospel of this Sunday leaves us with the abrupt, stern and inescapable challenge which Jesus gave to that woman; 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.'

If we have heard the word of God this morning, it may be that it has come as something of a shock, a painful eye-opener if we have been living in cosy blinkers; a painful disturber of the peace if we have been relying on

false securities, a painful deflator of false and fatuous piety if we have been living in a holy vacuum. It was with some such effect that Jesus' life, and above all His death, struck the religious world of His day, and it is just the same to-day. The cross is still a stumbling-block to some, and absolute nonsense to others; but it is also still the power of God to all those who are being saved.

WHAT TIME IS IT?

The Right Rev. ROBERT R. BROWN

I

‘**T**O every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance . . . a time to keep silent, and a time to speak.’ So wrote the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes (iii. 1, 4, 7). As we read these words, and particularly as we consider them in reference to this perplexing age, we cannot refrain from asking: ‘What time is it now?’

We look upward and see sputniks and missiles dotting the skies, and men circling the globe in outer space beyond the rim of the earth. Is this a time to weep, or a time to laugh? We look abroad to the international state of things where the very foundations of civilization seem to be toppling and splitting from the pressures of wars and rumours of wars, and where the spirit of democracy is being threatened daily by those who will not accept its way of life. Is this a time to mourn, or a time to dance? We look within our own boundaries and find divisions and strife brought to birth by the well-meaning and the not-so-well-meaning, sometimes from the womb of patriotism, sometimes from the breeding grounds of other ‘isms,’ but always with the name of Reform. Is it a time to keep silent, or a time to speak? Even the Church herself is not exempt from the effects of those who accuse her, or woo her, or discount her according to their ideologies. And so, though there may

be a time for every purpose under heaven, tell me: What time is it now?

We search the past for some precedent or some tradition to tell us the time, but there is no help for us there. The days are dead; the years are dead; history's statute of limitations seems to have run out. We reach forth to the future in hope of a sign, but no sign is given. There are question marks, but no exclamation points and no clues to tell us what lies ahead. Finally, desperately, we lift up our heads to God. We tell Him of 'the distress of nations with perplexity,' and of 'men's hearts failing them for fear,' and we ask, devoutly, in this Lenten Season to be told of the time. Then God answers us with words such as these: 'Little children, this is a time for Righteousness, for Brotherhood, and for Faith.'

Our Lord tells us that we must seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first of all. Surely every age must do so and the command is not peculiar to our times. But the times themselves are giving it a dreadful urgency. In a day when science appears to rule, scientists plead for us to understand that our chief task is not to harness nature, but to let God harness us. In an hour when might seems the only defence of right, military leadership prays for a Light which is not of man. In a day when individuals are concerned about defending their nation, statesmen remind that the starting point of such defence is with the individual. Truly, our major problem is not the scientific one of how to conquer the universe, nor the military one of how to conquer our enemies, but the spiritual one of how to be conquered by Christ.

The demands of God's Righteousness apply to the schoolboy in his classroom, and in his relations with other young people. They apply to the business practices

of individuals and corporations. They apply to honesty in advertising, integrity in contracts, and mutual trust between Management and Labour. In family life they apply to the fidelity of a husband to his wife and a wife to her husband, to the love of parents for a child and the respect of children for their elders. There is a Right and there is a Wrong. If we perform one we are living. If we concede to the other we may be breathing and stirring, but the sting of death is already upon us.

In Kipling's *Second Jungle Book* he told how the jungle and the jungle beasts subtly encroached upon a large Indian village which was too occupied with personal security and selfish comfort to realize what was occurring. Slowly and irrevocably these enemies crept forward to destroy the crops, slay the domesticated animals and drive the inhabitants away one by one, until finally that once thriving village was a part of the jungle again.

I do not say that Christians are permitting selfish occupations to blind them to the peril of an approaching jungle. I do not wish to be excessively negative and point only to human weakness when the multitude of God-given strengths is so apparent. But I do say that as Christians we have a continuing responsibility to our character and that any apathy towards individual or national morality will spell inevitable death.

What time is it? It is time to understand that we survive by the Grace of God and that this Grace requires a personal discipline by which we seek and work and sacrifice for the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness.

No less do these hours require Brotherhood. In the Book of Genesis we are given a graphic description of a murder. Cain, in a fit of jealousy, rose up and slew Abel because his offering to the Lord did not receive the same respect. Then came God's inevitable, blunt query:

'Where is Abel thy brother?' It is well said that all Law began with this question, that all social service, all government, and all morality were born there. But there are two sides to this question, and in these difficult times it seems exceedingly important to turn the query around. Each of us might pause during this Lenten Season and ask how we would reply were God to put the question: 'Where is Cain thy brother?' Where are those who are different from us, less fortunate than us, more desperate than us? Do we make a place for them in our lives? Are we concerned for them? As Christians we have a continuing responsibility for every sort and condition of man.

A radio drama of some years ago depicted the events leading up to the execution of an incorrigible criminal. The plot, however, did not centre on the condemned man himself. It told of five nooses in addition to the one which was to hang him. The first was prepared for his parents who had denied him his right to be loved. The second was for the school authorities who had seen him only as a problem, never as a human being. The third was for a politician who had feared to vote for a bill which would have wiped out the slums which nurtured him. The fourth was reserved for a representative of organized entertainment whose programmes had made crime and immorality seem attractive. And the fifth noose was for the average citizen of an average community whose indifference and apathy had made all the rest possible. 'Where is Cain thy brother?'

Much is being said of the threat to Freedom and Liberty and the Democratic Dream to-day. But we cannot protect Freedom by limiting it to a few, we cannot defend Liberty with slander, and we cannot proclaim a Democratic Dream while denying our individual responsibility for each other.

What time is it? It is a time to let Christ teach us to love. It is a time for every Christian to live a life of maximum service in an hour of maximum need. It is a time for Brotherhood.

Finally, it is a time for Faith: for the religious Faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Certainly we should know more about Communism to-day—how it operates as a religion of despair, a programme of deceit—how it ignores the individual, denies his basic freedom and subjects him to the tyranny of the state. Obviously, we should understand what is involved in any embryo Fascist movements to-day—how in the name of patriotism they appeal to fear, feed on suspicion, thrive on irresponsible denunciations. But most of all, we need to know the Faith which recognizes that this is God's world, and that He is alive in it!

Faith is not dogged adherence to narrow theological formulae; it is personal communion and fellowship with God. It is not an isolated wistfulness which is unrelated to the realities of everyday living; it is inseparably bound to everyday activity. Faith lives in the soul. It is a gift both given and won. It is a stirring, adventurous thing which receives the Divine revelation and responds with love and prayer and service. It is by Faith that we are moved to live righteously. It is by Faith that we are compelled to establish Brotherhood. Here is the clue to life, the seed of our hope and the spur to our action. Here is the environment for vision, the test for truth and the mother of courage.

What time is it? It is time to let the breath of God blow across the coals of our hearts. It is time to pray to Him with the uninhibited simplicity of little children,

time to be used by Him within the fellowship of His Church, and time to speak for Him in the knowledge that whatever the signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; whatever the distress of nations with perplexity, whatever the failure of men's hearts for fear, we can still look up, lift up our heads, for our redemption is drawing nigh.

Yes, 'to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.' So let us use this Lenten Season for some positive purposes. We may not do everything, but by God's Grace we can do what we ought to do. As Christians, whoever we are, wherever we are, we can strive for Righteousness, sacrifice for Brotherhood, labour for the increase of Faith. And in all we can make that simple thirteenth-century prayer our own:

Day by day,
Dear Lord, of Thee three things I pray:
To see Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
Follow Thee more nearly,
Day by day.

‘COME UNTO ME’

The Right Rev. R. R. WILLIAMS

‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you . . . for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

ST. MATT. xi. 28-30.

THESE are some of the most well-known words in the whole of the Bible. To members of the Church of England they are familiar, as the first of the so-called ‘comfortable words’—words of strength and consolation—addressed to the people at the Holy Communion. The idea came from the German Reformation, which used the phrase ‘Hear the Gospel-Comfort.’ From this our sentence ‘Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith’ is clearly taken. The words are almost as familiar from the beautiful solo in Handel’s *Messiah*, ‘Come unto Him.’ Round the apse of the chapel of my College the sentence is written in Greek characters. The words have always served as an epitome of the Gospel. When John Wesley addressed a thousand Cornish tin-miners in the open air at 5 o’clock one morning in the eighteenth century, he preached from these words, and their appeal to the hard-worked and then underpaid labourers had an obvious force.

I was myself made to think of them again recently by something I read in a recent book about the ‘yoke.’ Preachers have usually explained the ‘yoke of Christ’ by referring to the yoke used then and now to link two ploughing oxen, the idea being that we must be linked with Christ in order to plough or furrow through life straightly. But it is now suggested that the idea is rather

that of the carved strip of wood slung across the shoulders by which a peasant can carry two heavy loads, e.g. two buckets of water, with less effort. The people of Palestine were struggling to carry heavy burdens. They thought they could only please God by obeying a vast mass of legal regulations. Jesus said, 'God is not that sort of God at all. He has made you: He loves you: you must trust and love Him as I do, and leave the rest. Take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy: my burden is light.'

The burden of a complicated ritual law is not the burden most people are carrying to-day—perhaps some might profitably be a little more particular in obeying the precepts of religion. But if this word is to come with force, it must offer help in the carrying of to-day's burdens. What are the burdens under which men weary now, and how can Jesus help us carry them?

One burden is that of life's pressing duties. Everybody is busy nowadays, although for many actual working hours are shorter than hitherto. Life is lived at a greater speed than used to be the case. News from all parts of the world flashes on us all hour by hour. The problems on our minds are no longer those of the home, the farm, the village. Every world problem is our problem too. Man's insatiable adventure and curiosity are not content with exploring this planet. Romantic fiction and pseudo-science are fascinated by space-ships. Television plays picture wars with Mars, as if human wars had become too tame to thrill or terrify. Even sport is exacting. The choice of a Test team becomes a subject of bitter press controversy. On the result of a game of football may hang a substantial, if poorly earned, fortune.

Can modern man, weighed down with these burdens, hear Christ's call, 'Come unto Me . . . ye that are heavy laden. I will give you rest. Take my yoke.' If so, he

will learn from Christ that man's ultimate needs are simple. To know that all things are in God's hands, that He does not expect from us more than He enables us to achieve, that a loving home is man's greatest blessing, that this life is not all, that death is a gateway to fuller life—these are the things Christ still teaches through His Church. Take His yoke. His yoke is easy, His burden is light.

Then there is the burden of the world's suffering and pain. Modern science has done much to relieve suffering, but there is still what Wordsworth calls

... the burden of the mystery
... the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world.

Still the fact of death, with all the painful separations involved; still disease unconquered; still wrongs inflicted on man by man; still fear and anxiety, only heightened by modern skill in destruction. In this sense, too, man is weary and heavy laden: not all the time, but all at times, and some all the time.

What message for these so burdened is brought by the comfortable word of my text? As 'Come unto Me' rings out from every altar every Sunday, does it speak a word to those who feel the burden of the world's pain? When our Lord was on this earth, it did indeed. They brought to Him all that were sick, and He healed them. He bore our sicknesses and carried our sorrows. Still this literal offer of help is given to some in the name of Christ. We have recently heard again the wonderful story of Dr. Schweitzer, now eighty years of age, dedicating all his great gifts to healing the African in the name of Christ. Still much human sympathy is extended to those in trouble. Whether consciously or not, such sympathy and help is a fulfilment of the Christian command, 'Bear ye

one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Supremely, Christ's invitation to a suffering world to 'Come unto Him' is an invitation to share His perfect trust and obedience in God. To Him, this meant no escape from duty, from pain, and from death itself. It did mean victory in the face of all these things, and He means us to share that victory too.

Finally this call comes to those who know the burden of a troubled conscience. Sometimes at the end of life, sometimes at the height of its vigour, for some permanently, for others temporarily, there is known that secret burden of failure and frustration, that sense that if we had been different things would have been different, that we have let down ourselves, our friends, God Himself, not perhaps by some outward moral crash, but in subtler and deeper ways. To all such, to all who come to see that the burden of their sins is 'intolerable'—unable to be borne—Christ says 'Come unto Me. Take my yoke. Abandon a hopeless effort to measure up to your own phantasy of yourself. Stand with Me trusting entirely to God's provision and to His grace. Let my Cross be the answer to all the past: My grace the answer to all the future.'

At this Lenten season let us try to see our Lord inviting all men, all nations, ourselves included, to find rest and refreshment and inspiration from Him. Let us see the work of the Church in all lands as echoing Christ's invitation, making all men hear, making all men see.

CONTINENCE

The Rev. AUSTIN FARRER

'The body is not for unchastity, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.'

I COR. vi. 13.

POPULAR virtues can be left to look after themselves; we shall not increase their popularity by preaching them up; we shall only increase our own. And that is not the object of the exercise. We must preach the virtues nobody loves. For example, Chastity. Chastity is so hated, that it is generally thought to be no virtue at all; Chastity, that is, in the Christian sense, which restricts sexual gratification to marriage, and limits it even there. According to most of our contemporaries, there is no point in such a restriction, now that we have learnt how to indulge ourselves without letting fatherless children loose into the world. It is pointless, and worse than pointless; the doctrine of Christian chastity is a poison; it corrodes and inhibits the soul by frustrating natural desire; the passion which should have found an innocent outflow stagnates and festers in the mind.

Once the facts have been appreciated (our contemporaries say) the very word 'chastity' becomes a misnomer for what it conventionally designates. For chastity, *castitas*, means purity, a cleanness of heart and soul, such as fits the worshipper to approach his God. Now (it is said) there is nothing foul, or defiling, in free enjoyment with those we sincerely love, whether we happen to be married to them, or not. It is the effects of forced restraint that are foul; the inward pollution of the imagination, not to mention occasional outbreaks into acts of sordid

lust—here is unchastity if you like, a profanation of love and a blasphemy against the God of Nature.

The attack is pushed still further, and flung against our last stronghold. Christianity, say our enemies, appears to us on all sides to be an overstrained idealism, content to spoil most souls, so long as it can make saints of a few. This would be bad enough, even if the saints, produced at such a cost, were worth having. But they are not. We do not like your prize products; we do not admire the celibate, or virginal character; we find it timid, cold and immature.

A preacher ought to give the devil his due; but the devil has so much to say, that if we rehearse all his arguments, we shall have no space left to speak for the angels. And there is really no need for me to enlarge on the current anti-Christian doctrine, since it is so well known. Why, half the novels written are propaganda in favour of it. Perhaps the most effective, because the most insidious, propaganda is the story which blandly assumes the disappearance of Christian morality; or that none but green children and withered elders take any notice of it. But more significant from our point of view is the conversion-story, the spectacle of a believer in the law of Christ won over to the new religion of nature.

We call such a story significant, because it reveals a conflict between two religions, or at least two moralities, both sincerely held. The question is, which is best, or rather, which is the truth. And it will be as useless as it is unjust, to accuse of bad faith those who disagree with us; or to begin convicting them of sin, before we have convinced them of error. You might as well denounce Hindus for believing reincarnation or Mohammedans for revering the Koran. The Church is fighting for her life, not against sin (the victory would be easy) but against

a rival god, an incompatible ideal. We may think that our nature-worshippers (if we are to call them such) let themselves off lightly, and have an ethical creed suspiciously palatable to the sensual man. But that does not prove them to be in bad faith. On the contrary; it is an argument in favour of a moral system, that it agrees with ordinary feeling; virtue should be expected to satisfy the heart.

Since the sexual impulse is not peculiar to mankind, it may have a sobering and realistic effect, if we begin by recalling its animal function. That function is, unquestionably, the reproduction of the race; just as the function of the hunger impulse is the sustaining of individual life, and the function of fear, the avoidance of mortal danger. But there is something unique about the sexual impulse. The emotional pains of fear or of hunger merely enforce and anticipate evident physical penalties—if we defy hunger, we presently lose strength; if we defy danger, we run into actual harm. The sexual appetite has not, to the animal, any such immediate practical relevance. A brute suffers nothing physically and directly from failing to obey it. And so its command over him must be all the more imperious, if it is to achieve its end. There must be a strength of impulse, an intensity of pleasure, a restlessness of dissatisfaction quite unique, if he is to be carried to the discharge of a function, whose consequences are nothing to him.

The great excess and overplus of sexual impulse is inherited by man, the rational creature; and what is he to make of it? What part is it to play in the existence of a being perfectly well able to see ahead, and to appreciate the consequences of his acts? Will not he discipline it, and subordinate it? It seems absurd that, having achieved reason, we should make a god of a principle which owes

its peculiar power to an incapacity for thought. But how are we to discipline an impulse such as this? We cannot simply mortify or weaken it, as we may a vicious habit. It is a great power-drive in us, constituted as we are; we are bound to use the engines nature has powered us with, and make the best of them. We do not, indeed, require all this sexual energy for its direct use, so we divert it into a dozen channels; it becomes the impulse of ambition and of art, of personal affection and of social philanthropy; not least, of religious devotion.

If such is the human predicament, it is not surprising that different religions, different cultures, different moralities should have arisen in the long ages of history, with different recipes for the human employment of the sexual impulse. And how radically different these recipes have been! We are inclined to think that there is a simple and natural something called 'love' (in the sexual sense of the word); and proceed to rank that system of life highest, which best allows 'love' to be itself. But any anthropologist, any historian of culture, will tell us that our supposition is false. Our romantic love is an amalgam between natural passion and acquired ideas; a mixture of inescapable instinct and alterable culture. What we take to be love is something like the American way of life: we have got it, all right; but we did not have to have it.

It is absurd, then, to measure Christianity by its power to accommodate, or to express, romantic love as currently understood. Christianity is a different system; it has a different formula, other ideals. It is this that makes the present position of Christians so distressing. We live in a world of whose outward form Christianity has largely lost control; and to practise the Christian pattern of life in such a world will often seem strained, artificial and

painful. Two sorts of awkward consequences follow from our predicament. First, it can be a grievous effort to keep the Christian rules yourself, where the general pattern of living gives you no support. Second, and perhaps worse—you will be put in a false position with others. You will fail to do what they expect of you in the most intimate relations of life; you will disappoint their hearts, and even offend their moral sense. 'Miserable man,' says Potiphar's wife, 'hugging his precious chastity, instead of giving it up to me!'

If Christian chastity is such a burden in an unchristian age, why make the effort to carry it? Shall we say that at whatever pain to ourselves, we are called upon to save the truth, for our own and for future ages? That our position is like the position of the primitive Christians? If they had not been prepared to stand the strain of Christian conduct in a pagan world, the Church would undoubtedly have perished. There was much falling away, but there were enough heroic souls to save the faith. Our lot is not harder than that of the martyrs.

Ah, but the martyrs were convinced of their cause. The Son of God had conquered death and routed all the spirits who bedevilled the pagan scene. If our predicament seems worse than theirs, it is because we lack their conviction. What is the principle of chastity? Why is it so worth fighting for? I must attempt some sort of answer; it will certainly be an incomplete one.

The God who made us is not unaware of the fact he permitted Sigmund Freud to discover, that man, dynamically viewed, is a sexual animal. Therefore, having raised us to the capacity of fellowship with himself, this God, whom Moses dares to call jealous, is determined to capture the dynamo of our heart, our basic fund of emotional force, and turn it to his service. He

has prescribed two ways. There is the hard way, where the sublimation or redirection of sexual force is complete. And in answer to the charge, that those who tread this path are unattractive figures, we can only put forward the radiant holiness of Jesus Christ, and of those virginal saints whom supernatural charity has wholly possessed. An inability to appreciate such splendours merely convicts of blindness the beholder. Happy are they who have known such men, or such women, face to face. Yet the calling is for few, and most of us, trying to follow it, would be miserable, or frustrated. Nor would the purposes of God be served; since He also loves and fosters the nature He has made.

Nevertheless our Creator will not surrender His claim upon any one of us. He will not have any of us knot so tying a bond, so intimate and exclusive an association as fleshly union is, except with the person whom we can receive from His own hands, and under His own law, and for His own purposes. A husband or wife is given us as the deputy of Christ Himself, to be loved with as entire and as exclusive a loyalty. So marriage becomes a sacrament of religion, and a speaking likeness of our union with our Redeemer.

The Christian scheme of life has its centre in God. If we let go of that principle we shall make no sense of Christian morals. The rival doctrine is the cult not of God but of personal relationships, pursued for their own sakes and according to our own sweet wills. A and B, in the golden flattering light of amatory emotion, are sure that the affair between them is the most exquisite blossom of love. If it were legalized, and public, if it were made the foundation of parenthood, and the focus of innumerable domestic cares, how it would be vulgarized and profaned! Yet this profanation, this vulgarization,

is exactly what the terrible practicality of God's will demands. God is not so much concerned to hand us exquisite nosegays of irresponsible feeling. He is concerned to get on with His world. He wants to draw us into obligations, not to let us off them; He wants to make families, and get children, and build up our souls.

And, of course, marriage is most natural, after all; it keeps sexual union where it animally belongs, that is, in some sort of relation with procreation. Nothing else can anchor love to reality. No serious thinker, however unchristian, can doubt that sexual union is a very special sort of relationship. No one can seriously suppose that life would be enriched, if we each treated our whole acquaintance in the other sex as a sort of harem. A love-affair between decent people is always a little parody of marriage. The real thing is better. Here as elsewhere, what God's will asks of us may look forbidding from outside, but it proves our true happiness, once we are in.

I will conclude with a remark about the sinfulness of forbidden sexual acts. It is complained that cruelty and hypocrisy are vastly worse than unchastity, and yet that they are less punished by the Church. Very true; unchaste acts are not specially wicked. What is peculiar about them is that they are specially definite. We fall into unkindness or insincerity before we know it; all we can do is to repent, when we become aware of it. But an unchaste act is an unchaste act; the Christian who commits it goes flat against the divine law, and knows it. That is the special heinousness, for Christians, of the unchaste act. I say, for Christians; by such a standard we know that we must judge ourselves. To those outside we should be most tolerant, most generous. Very likely they are living up to their lights; who are we to judge? There is one Judge, the Judge of quick and dead, the

reader of hearts, whose justice is exact, but instrumental always to his mercy; by whose grace alone our sins are forgiven, and our heaven assured, in the light of His countenance; where the Father is visible in the Son, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; to whom, three Persons in one God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, dominion, majesty and power, henceforth and for ever.

LOST AND FOUND

The Right Rev. RUSSELL T. RAUSCHER

'A certain man had two sons . . .'—ST. LUKE XV. 11.

WHILE this parable is not included in the propers for the Season of Lent, it is most certainly one of the profound portrayals of human reaction to a true life situation. For us the circumstances may be different, but our needs are the same. It is good to meditate on this story, for it is like a mirror in which we can see ourselves, even though through our own weakness the reflection is often distorted. It is a parable that portrays the inner emotions and drives within us and of our search for forgiveness and reconciliation and very vividly it portrays our littleness, perverseness and self-righteousness.

Above all it points out in unmistakable terms the desire and joy of God in bringing about reconciliation, the act of being united once again after estrangement and separation.

The parable is a story of existence, because in the personality of each character we can, through the grace of God, see ourselves with the same desires, emotions and needs. It is easy to identify ourselves with any one of the persons in the story, but in reality there is within all of us a little of each.

The younger son, perhaps eager for adventure and fed up with the routine life at home, wanted to get away from it all. The love of the father was taken for granted. He had always lived under the shadow of paternal

affection, and because of this he could not have had any notion of the loneliness of separation. His home was probably one that was well ordered, not luxurious, but comfortable, he knew something of the discipline of labour, even if there were servants. But because of his youth and immaturity, the happiness of sonship was overshadowed by the monotony of the security which it afforded.

Approaching his father in a lighthearted manner, with no thought of the sorrow it would bring, he said, 'Father, my life here is not very exciting. I want to leave and go where I can see a little of the world. I want to be where things are happening. Give me my inheritance.' Now, he loved his father and his brother, and would continue to do so, but along with that love he wanted to experience and enjoy what the world and others could give.

Because of the intensity of the father's love he did as the son requested; he would not, he could not stand in the son's way, knowing that love cannot be held by threat or force. He knew that his son's love could only be held by his own willingness to lose it, with the eternal hope that if lost could be regained through the maturity that comes from the fullness of life's experiences. So he divided unto them his living.

It is not at all difficult to visualize the excitement that surrounded the departure of the younger son. He was dressed in a robe prepared for the journey, with a bag of coins hanging from his belt. He was anxious to get started, but yet with some hesitation in saying good-bye. The sorrow of the father showed through his words of good wishes for his well-being, envy was apparent in the indifference of the brother, and the genuine concern of the servants as they gave him last minute advice.

This was the picture as the young son departed to a far country.

In his new environment he was initially supremely happy, new friends, new experiences; living only for the day and the pleasures it could afford, he was still conscious of his father's love, but he was willing to settle for that love by long distance. He was not aware that he was in a far country, that he had by his own choice put distance between himself and his family. His decision had been made deliberately. The lure of excitement and the fleeting adulation of new friends seemed far better than the simple but enduring love and concern of his father back home.

In his experience he pinned his hopes for his future well-being on the 'things' his material possessions would provide. It seemed enough for a lifetime and yet how quickly it was gone. He began to be in want. He had time for reflection, having been deserted by his new-found friends. His first thought was of home. How typical! In his immediate need he thought of the bounty of his father's table. That which he had always taken for granted. He knew that the lowest servant in his own home did not suffer the pangs of hunger as he was suffering.

In his need 'he came to himself.' He was out on a limb and he knew it. In this predicament his fertile mind hatched a little scheme. He thought, perhaps honestly, that being a well-fed servant would be better than being a starving and suffering son. Now, he was experiencing for the first time the real meaning of separation, even though it was primarily because of the pangs of hunger. His scheme was simply that he would put his pride in his pocket, and go home. He had worked the old man before, and he could do it again. The plan was carefully thought out. Upon his arrival he would just say, 'Father,

I have done wrong against God and against you and I am truly sorry for it. I should have listened to you. Now because of my disobedience I am not really worthy to come back as your son, but I want to stay; just make me one of your hired men.' He was certain in his mind that this would soften up the old man's anger. He didn't realize, he was incapable of knowing the depth of his father's love for him. And so he started home, weak, exhausted and hungry, but confident that his scheme would work.

Even before he reached home, his father, who had fallen into the habit of looking out over the horizon expectantly for his son's return, saw him, ran to him speechless with joy. In this silent drama not a word was spoken, but by a simple sacramental act, sonship was recreated for the wayward boy. Then as if by the compulsion of a well-rehearsed speech he began with a voice filled with emotion, 'Father, I have sinned against God and you, I am no longer worthy of being your son. . . .' But there he stopped, he couldn't carry through his scheme. The words that he had so carefully thought out stuck in his throat. He could not speak of servitude when he had just discovered, perhaps for the first time, the meaning of sonship. He knew that although he had been selfish and in a far country, that he had been forgiven even before he could express his sorrow. The father's love had been there all the time. To show the joy of the father the feast was prepared, for the lost was now home.

The elder brother had never left home. He had worked hard, he had been faithful through the years, he had been a part of the household all his life. Now he was angry because of the festivities as an expression of joy at his brother's return. He would have no part of it, and

preferred to remain outside and sulk. There was no love there for his brother or his father, only resentment.

The father in his happiness and the expectation of joy of the elder brother, said, 'Your *brother* has come home.' His reply to the father gave himself away as to his relationship. The very words which the younger brother could not utter when the chips were down, came easily to this angry young man, 'Lo, these many years do I *serve* thee.' He had thought of himself all these years not as a son, but as a servant. 'Never have I disobeyed you.' This was self-righteousness at its worst. 'You have never rewarded me with a party like this.' Envy and jealousy filled his heart. 'But as soon as this thy son (not my brother, but thy son) was come who has spent his inheritance with prostitutes' (malicious imagination, for the story does not relate this; he was putting his brother in the worst possible light) 'thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.'

This great parable ends with the father's promise. 'Son, it is right that we should be glad, for thy brother was gone and is home with us again. Thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine. Only the love that I have for you cannot be yours unless it is shared with your brother.'

Being careless about or taking for granted the love of our Heavenly Father is a grievous sin of which everyone is guilty. By our own actions we have cut ourselves off from it and have gone into a far country. Like the younger brother we have been permitted to know the joy of forgiveness and to know that time after time we have been reunited with our Father in heaven and our brethren on earth. We know the blessedness of once again putting our feet under the Lord's Table and the joy of reconciliation with our brethren within and without the Household.

Reconciliation can never come about as long as anger, jealousy, self-righteousness and maliciousness fill our hearts.

The grace of God, through prayer, Word and Sacrament enables us time after time when we too are in a far country to 'come to ourself.' The Holy Spirit gives in full measure a penitent heart and Christ Himself is ever reaching out to us as prodigal sons and makes us the recipients of His love and therefore sons within His family, the Church.

A DISCIPLINE—A COMMAND— AN ASSURANCE

The Rev. DARWIN KIRBY

I THANK God for Lent. I love it. I welcome it. Lent is an interruption; it invades our casualness, calls us from the circumference to the centre, from marginal matters to the great central concerns of the soul. It is a season of deep and searching self-examination, a season of gallant effort to pull up and out of the rut, a season of return to simple and sturdy terms of Christian discipleship. And it is a season of deliberate detachment. Jesus went into the wilderness alone with God. I counsel no one to set out for Mount Athos, Monte Cassino, St. Gall, Cîteaux. You need go no farther than the upper chamber in your own dwelling where you can refresh your spirit and wash the dust from your soul.

Every religion which amounts much to man—Brahmanism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity—has periods of withdrawal from the world for the sake of knowing God. I see Lent as an entrance into locks from a lower level. The flood flows in and the tide is lifted; and when Easter comes, we go out on a higher level.

I want to say three things about Lent. It is a discipline; it is a command; it is an assurance. One of our atomic scientists, von Braun, has said, 'Man has been freed from the chains of gravity.' Well, he has yet to be freed from the chains of sin, greed, lust, pride. Lent is the time to put our house in order. We are told to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and most of us are so soft

and flabby that the devil could make a dent in us with his little finger.

Discipline and self-denial seem frequently out of place to-day. We all know so many people whose lives are dedicated to the pursuit of creature comforts. Hair shirts are out of fashion. Flagellation is not popular. But the body, which Saint Francis called Brother Ass, gets despotic, and, in Lent, we put it under lest we become castaways. I am not speaking of dreary negatives or harsh taboos. To come to the heart of the matter, asceticism puzzles many who think themselves practical. The whole point about Saint Francis—so splendid at the beginning of Lent—is that he was an ascetic, but he was certainly not gloomy. As Chesterton has said, he flung himself into fastings and vigils exactly as he had flung himself furiously into battle. It was not self-denial for its own sake. It was as positive as a passion; it was as positive as a pleasure; he devoured fasting as a man devours food. He plunged after poverty as men have dug madly for gold. And it is precisely this positive and passionate note of his personality that is a challenge to the modern in the pursuit of pleasure.

Regard this on a purely humanistic level. William James says, 'Practice self-denial. Do something every day, no matter what, for no other reason than that you would rather not do it.' Aim at self-mastery in trivial things and discover how weak is your will to control your actions. Thomas à Kempis, who almost always has the last word to say on everything, writes 'unless thou deny thyself, thou shalt not have liberty.' No character can be built, or anything of value accomplished, without discipline. In this age of easy living, self-denial is for many meaningless. But those who live under the obsession of material pleasures will find at the end of that road only

the dust and the ashes of satiety. The salvation of this planet lies not in entertainment and creature comfort which enervate. Man with his free will to live for good or ill, has harnessed the elements, the ocean and the air. But he will never know freedom and happiness until he has tamed himself. Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power. Discipline is the power that shapes the man, the same old 'beer-drinking, creed-making, fighting, failing, sensual, average, respectable man.' Self-denial is the chisel of God for our perfecting, and, in Lent, we discipline the cruder, the grosser, the self-indulgent self.

Ah, it seems a little thing to make a rule to get up a half-hour earlier, for instance, and to have the strength to say 'No' to the body when it pleads for a little more time in bed. But it is a big thing if it teaches us to say 'No' to our besetting sin which is sapping our moral force, that over-mastering habit which we do not seem able to resist. Obviously, there is no use to give up alcohol and tobacco and not give up pride and meanness; no use to give up meat on Wednesday and Friday, and not gossip and backbiting. Our penances and denials are meant to show ourselves loyal followers of the crucified, whose Godhead we profess and whose disciples we say we are. This is the way—walk ye in it.

A great Christian teacher has said that Western materialistic society has taken Christ without His Cross—a soft, sentimentalized bed-of-roses Christ—as if we adored a God crowned with roses and pearls. And the Communists have taken the Cross without Christ. They have not Christ; but they have the cross of vigour, the cross of self-denial, the cross of discipline, the hardness of the cross. The words ascribed to Saint Dominic speaking of the Albigenian heresy strike the note of the discipline of Lent. Saint Dominic says to the Papal

legates who are coming to fight the Albigensian heresy, 'It is not by a display of power and pomp and a cavalcade of retainers and richly housed palfreys, nor by gorgeous apparel, that the heretics win proselytes. It is by zealous preaching, apostolic humility, austerity. Zeal must be met by zeal, humility by humility, false sanctity by real sanctity, preaching falsehood by preaching truth. Cast off those sumptuous robes, send away the richly caparisoned palfreys, go without purse or scrip like the Apostles. Out—labour! Out—fast! Out—discipline those false teachers!'

From the training and discipline of Lent will come to us a sense of newness and reality in our religion, a sense of joy and freshness which can be an astonishment and surprise. To be other than we are presupposes the discipline not for its own sake, but for greater intimacy with God. Only in this way shall we be allowed to move with greater ease in the spiritual life, and attain to some halls of space and avenues of leisure in the soul, some stately distances of manner and high porticoes of silence, some spacious approaches to the Interior Mansion where God and His angels condescend to walk.

Lent is a command to take our religion seriously, and, therefore, to win souls. I ask the question to all those who have been signed with the sign of the Cross, who are in the Church, who are on the Lord's side. Put the question: Are you on His side just as an ornament? Do you think that you add to His Cause a note of exquisite piety and loveliness, a note of personal dignity and charm, or are you on the Lord's side to do something? You have been baptized. Whom do you bring to Baptism? You make your Communion. Whom have you helped to restore to Communion? You have been confirmed. Whom have you brought to Confirmation? You may

feel terribly inadequate; but so did Moses. You may say the wrong thing. So did Peter. You may once have had no use for the Church. Nor had Paul. But God uses them—and us—to bring men to Himself.

And has it occurred to you that we in our little Anglican Communion have the greatest treasures to offer and everything to give? We stand for a Catholicism which is democratic, not autocratic; dynamic, not static; free, not feudal; apostolic, not papal; genuinely universal, not crammed into the mould of a single Mediterranean group. We look upon Roman Catholics as our brethren beloved, and we look upon Protestants as our brethren beloved. We think the Romanists have gone too far in their claim to be the whole Church; and we think that Protestants have reacted too violently against fifteenth- and sixteenth-century abuses into an atomism which denies the purpose of Christ. So, with all our faults, and they are many, we stand in a unique position to assist all souls into a restored, organic, unified Body of Christ. We are Catholic in Faith, polity and liturgical worship. We are axiomatically protestant against all human infallibilities, whether of the Bible or the Pope. Within the Anglican Communion are the dimensions of authority and freedom, of individual initiative and corporate controls, of rapt mystical experience and humble submission to discipline. We have a Catholicism without superstition, and a Protestantism without vagueness. We may well be the particle upon which the whole amorphous solution of Christendom will one day crystallize.

In Lent—and in all times—we are commanded as Churchmen and disciples of the Saviour to go forth and bring souls to the knowledge of Christ, to bring men to the great glad truths about Christ and His Church. We are

members of the historic Christian Church of Christ's own founding; and a Churchman who does not spread his Faith is a parasite on the Life of the Church. He who is not girding his loins for the Apostolate is abdicating his seat on the dais of Christianity, and is like a tree cut down on the road, impeding the march of the army of God.

Lent is an assurance. A member of the Russian Orthodox Church in Paris has written of a beautiful custom in the Eastern Church. At the beginning of Lent there is a Vesper service; the Church is dark and everything is covered with black. The Lenten prayers are said, and the people prostrate themselves, and suddenly in this sad and penitential atmosphere, the choir begins to sing, very quietly, the Easter hymns. It is like a hope and encouragement showing that 'it will come—do not forget.' And the knowledge of God's help during a difficult time can be like these Easter hymns during the Lent Service.

Lent moves forward to the Passion of Christ and the majestic epic of the might of God. This drama is the key to the fearsome and glorious mysteries of God's love and man's sin, and the measure of the agony and terror which that love cost. The assurance is with us and, if in this Lent, or in any of the days of your life, you become discouraged and you feel some power is pushing you down, that some force is pushing you under—if you can identify these powers with the force that crucified our Lord, you don't have to be afraid any more. For the Cross was the worst that evil could do. The worst the Devil could do was to crucify our divine Lord. The worst that evil could do was to give you the Body and the Blood of Christ.

THE MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

The Rev. CHARLES SMYTH

'Be not conformed to this world . . .'—ROM. xii. 2.

MOST of us, I imagine—certainly on the first encounter—find the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews somewhat difficult. These chapters are occupied with an abstract and complex argument, by which the author seeks to prove the finality of the Christian religion. The elaborate and many-sided contrast which he draws between Christianity and Judaism is apt to strain our attention and to fatigue our interest. We find the discussion profitless and arid, its method and its problems alike remote from the religious idiom of our time. What concern of ours (we ask impatiently) is all this laboured exposition of the deficiencies of Jewish ritual, this demonstration of its inability to satisfy our deepest needs? Our standpoint is no longer that of readers for whom there was something novel and startling in the idea that it is a sheer impossibility for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins. We are Christians of the twentieth century: with the imperfections and inadequacies of the tabernacle, its priesthood and its sacrifices, we are not concerned. The truth which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews sought to force upon unwilling ears has become to us the merest commonplace.

And yet, as I hope to show, it is a mistake to think that this Epistle deals only with dead issues. On the contrary, in spite of the alien garb in which it has come down to us, it is in some ways one of the most contemporary of the

New Testament scriptures; and it presents an urgent and a highly disconcerting challenge to every one of us.

Admittedly, its historic context—the circumstances under which it was written—is out of date and does not precisely correspond to anything in our experience. The Epistle was probably addressed to a house-church, or what we might call a Christian cell, in Rome, by one of its members who was absent from it. The people to whom it was written were Jews by race who had been Jews by religion and had become Christians, but who were now in danger of apostatizing, and returning from Christianity to the Judaism in which they had been brought up. The fundamental argument of the Epistle is therefore designed to establish the proposition that what they fondly imagined they could find in Judaism could not, in fact, be found there, but *could* be found in a perfect and final form in Christianity. And this is demonstrated by a very elaborate contrast between the nature of the two religions, based upon the philosophical conception of the two ages, the two aeons, the two worlds, which the author has derived from Alexandrian thought. Judaism belongs to the material world, and its physical character and attributes mark it out for dissolution: whereas Christianity belongs to the eternal, immaterial order, and therefore no decay can ever overtake it. Consequently, as St. Paul when dealing with a not altogether dissimilar crisis in Galatia besought his converts not to desire to be again in bondage to the beggarly elements of the natural world (*Gal.* iv. 9), so also the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews adjures his fellow-churchmen to rise from the physical and the material into that pure region of eternity in which the spirit finds its congenial home.

Yet a reader who had followed his argument with care

and attention, and who might have been impressed by the cogency of his reasoning, could none the less object—although the flank of this objection is, in fact, strategically turned in the eleventh chapter, the great chapter on Faith and the Heroes of Faith, which is familiar to us all, even if we have failed to grasp the nature of the argument to which it pertains—the reader, as I say, could very plausibly object that, from this very demonstration, the conclusion might legitimately be drawn that, though Christianity is the heavenly religion, Judaism might be better fitted for us while here on earth. If less spiritual than Christianity, the old religion was at least more tangible and familiar, and conceded more to human weakness; and, although its material character might stamp it as transitory and provisional, yet a full recognition that it was superseded in heaven might still be compatible with the view that it ought to be maintained on earth, as a practical religion adapted to the environment in which we actually live.

Why (it might be asked) should we expect in so imperfect a world to have a perfect religion? And why should we, who are not spirit only, but body as well, reject a religion because it is material? When all is said and done, we, too, are transitory creatures of this age, denizens of this world; and while we remain so, is it not more sensible that we should practise a religion in harmony with, and appropriate to, the conditions of our existence here below, rather than a religion appropriate to the somewhat hypothetical conditions of the world to come?

Let it be said here in parenthesis that such an objection exhibits a total misunderstanding, not only of the doctrine of the Incarnation (the Word made flesh), but also of the sacramental principle, whereby material objects—water, bread, and wine—are utilized by the power of

God to convey an inward and spiritual grace of which they are, by His divine ordinance, the outward and visible sign. That is what Archbishop William Temple meant when he said in his Gifford Lectures that Christianity is 'the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions.'¹

But that, for the moment, is a side-issue. My purpose now is to pick up the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews at this point, and to extend it in a different direction. Perhaps you have already anticipated what I am going to say next. For, from the question 'Is it not more sensible that we should practise a religion adapted to the conditions of this world, rather than a religion appropriate to the world to come?' there follows, very naturally and logically, the supplementary question: '*And is not this in fact the sort of religion by which you and I are actually living?*' Or, to put the question in another way: 'You call yourself a Christian. You are, in fact, a practising member of the Church of England. But, apart from this, what is the difference between you and your neighbours who do not go to church or say their prayers?'

Of course, by this stage in the history of Western Christendom, the situation has become confused. There is no longer—as there was under the Roman Empire, and as there still is in the Mission field—a sharp, a vivid, and a dramatic contrast between the Christians on the one hand, and pagan society on the other. Christianity has operated like leaven in the evolution of our culture, so that (for example) in the West to-day the Christian ideal of marriage, which was once so revolutionary a conception of the married state, is now taken for granted even by those who do not share the faith on which it

¹ W. Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (1934), p. 478.

rests, and to whom the language of the Form of Solemnization of Matrimony in our Prayer Book, about God having 'consecrated the state of Matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church,'¹ must be totally incomprehensible. Conversely—for there has been both give and take—what are technically known as the Four Cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance or Self-Control), as distinct from the Three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, have been taken over by Christianity from the highest and the noblest ideals of pagan classical philosophy in general, and of Stoicism in particular. You will find them in the Apocrypha (*Wisd.* viii. 7), where the very enumeration of them reveals the influence upon later Jewish thought of its contact with Hellenistic culture: but somehow they do not belong to the straight line of development, nor to the native idiom either of the Law or of the Gospel. Indeed, both in the realm of thought and in the realm of conduct, there has been so considerable a degree of mutual assimilation during the intervening centuries that the frontiers between Christianity and Paganism have become inextricably blurred. It may be too much to say that in the England, or the Cambridge, of to-day there is not much to choose between Christians and non-Christians: but it is no exaggeration to say that, to the casual observer, they appear to behave very much alike, except on Sundays.

In a paper on 'The Contemporary Social Environment of Christianity' which was read to the Modern Churchmen's Conference at Bristol in 1952, a Liberal theologian observed: 'It has been said of the Churches that they were feudal under feudalism, capitalist under capitalism,

¹ Cf. Ephesians v. 22–32.

and socialist under socialism. This may not necessarily be a criticism, for to be adaptable to a new environment is sometimes the means of directing it; but it rather suggests a lack of prophetic testimony (which is the breath of vital religion), and a desperate anxiety not to offend.' On this it is permissible to comment, first, that the epigram as quoted contains a most palpable confusion of terms, for feudalism was a social structure, capitalism is an economic technique, and socialism is a political theory; second, that it is not particularly true; and thirdly, that the word 'prophetic' requires some further definition, unless we are to assume that it means that it is the business, or part of the business, of bishops and other dignitaries of the Church to make periodical pronouncements about sociology, politics, and economics; which is indeed the meaning that has lately come to be attached to it, and which, if carried to its logical conclusions, would justify us in censuring St. Paul for his personal failure in 'prophetic testimony,' for he nowhere denounces the institution of slavery. However, although the epigram is evidently worthless, yet it is not altogether without significance that such taunts should be levelled against 'organized Christianity' (if I may borrow a foolish and unmeaning phrase which is now happily outmoded). And moreover—and this is surely the real point—it is a question how far the Church (which means, the Christians) can be adaptable to a new environment without compromising in some measure those principles and standards which are peculiarly its own.

According to the Bible (*Titus* ii. 14: cf. *Deut.* xiv. 2), we are 'a peculiar people.' In practice, we are very much like everybody else. Of course I know that the word 'peculiar' in that context means very much what we mean by 'proprietary,' and implies only that in a unique and

distinctive sense, we belong to God: but even this suggests that somehow—in the way we think and in the way that we behave—we ought to be *more* different from other people than in fact we are. What is there to distinguish us from them?

There are, indeed, certain principles or doctrines of a generally anti-social character, involving an open non-conformity with the world, which have from time to time arisen from within the Church, such as Communism, Puritanism, and Pacifism; but these the Church has always officially repudiated (as in Articles XXXVII and XXXVIII of our Thirty-nine Articles), although without unduly tyrannizing over individual consciences. Where the State is officially Christian or neutral in religion, the Church has not made difficulties, except where its own legitimate interests are concerned. From the beginning, even in the days of the Roman Empire (*Rom.* xiii. 1-7; *1 Pet.* ii. 13-17), we have accepted it as part of our duty as Christians to be good citizens. Apart from our attendance at public worship, we have no peculiar habits that a visitor from another planet might observe: we use no esoteric vocabulary, we wear no distinctive garb—unlike, for example, the Quakers in the England of the eighteenth century, whose speech and dress and usages made them, in the phrase of Bernard Manning, ‘a semi-monastic order in lay society.’¹ However profound our religious convictions may be, we talk about our religion very little; less, indeed, than about almost any other of our interests in life. We wear no livery and no badge, except the cross upon our foreheads with which we were signed in baptism; and that is invisible except to God and His angels. To the human

¹ B. L. Manning, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (1952), p. 20.

eye we are indistinguishable from men and women of the world.

And yet our *other* experiences and avocations leave their mark upon us. If you are sitting opposite a total stranger in a railway carriage, you can often guess that he is an army officer or a naval officer in mufti. If you are staying in a hotel on holiday, you can often recognize a schoolmaster (or, more easily, a brace of schoolmasters) among your fellow guests. Although nowadays it has become hard to tell whether a man was at a public school or not, it is sometimes possible to distinguish an Old Etonian from a Wykehamist; and if you meet someone who was educated at one of the older universities, it is not generally very difficult to tell whether he is an Oxford or a Cambridge man. It is true indeed that all these brands are gradually effaced in time, and eventually become almost unrecognizable. But, in a nominally Christian country, there is seldom anything of this sort to differentiate the Christian from the pagan.

All this, I think—with all that it implies—is genuinely puzzling and disquieting, and I do not pretend to know the answer to it. But sometimes it is the function of the preacher to describe problems rather than to solve them. And here is a very real problem—the problem of our ostensible conformity to this world. Is it natural? Is it inevitable? Is it *wrong*? I would beg you, every one of you, to make time to go into this question, and to do it on your knees before Almighty God; and the question is this: ‘Is there anything that I do because I am a Christian, which the ordinary decent respectable children of this world do not do because they are not Christians? Is there anything that I do *not* do because I am a Christian, which the ordinary decent respectable children of this

world do because they are not Christians? Or is my religion purely nominal, a matter of superficial habit, which causes me very little inconvenience? Is my whole life a sort of organized hypocrisy, which is the more dangerous precisely because it is unconscious? Do I keep one religion—a practical religion—for this world, and another—a rather theoretical religion—for the world to come?' Each one of us must answer these questions for himself, because nobody else can do it for us, and it has got to be done, probably more than once in a lifetime, and the sooner the better. I may, however, suggest very briefly three considerations as bearing on the general, and therefore also on the individual problem, which perhaps may help.

(1) Our Lord said: 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' Deliberately He did not define either the former or the latter, nor did He suggest that the differences between them are clearly demarcated, so that they cannot overlap.

(2) St. Paul tells us that our citizenship—the word is wrongly translated 'conversation'—is in heaven (*Phil.* iii. 20, *R.V.*). Our ultimate Sovereign is God: we belong to Him. And this means two things.

It means, first, that when anyone who is known to be a Christian—and this is most conspicuously true in the case of a priest, but it is true also of the laity—when anyone who is publicly identified as a Christian commits a criminal offence, the scandal created and the harm done—the scandal principally outside the Church, and the harm principally within it—is incomparably greater than if the same offence had been committed by anyone who was not known to be a Christian, or was known not

to be a Christian. In spite of everything that I have said hitherto, in the eyes of the world we *are* marked men.

And it means also, in the second place, that, because we are not conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds through regular communion with God in sacrament and prayer, therefore our *standards of judgement* are different from those of the world, *even when we arrive at the same conclusions*. For example, Englishmen (unlike most other Europeans, especially beyond the Danube or the Pyrenees) have an ingrained dislike of violence, except possibly and occasionally as a deterrent to violence. But our motives as Englishmen for disliking violence are, historically and otherwise, different from our motives as Christians for disliking violence, although these two sets of motives are not wholly unrelated and do in fact concur. So, all along the line, the values of the children of this world are different in kind from those of even the most simple Christian. The world likes the 'good mixer,' at least until he is old enough to become a bore: the Christian instinctively recognizes and admires the saint. The two things that, more than any other, damn a man in the eyes of the world, are to be a bad son to his mother, or to be rude to servants. The Christian certainly does not condone such conduct, which is as un-Christian as it is unloving or ungentlemanly; but he relates it to its fundamental causes. He practises self-examination on the basis, not of the conduct of a gentleman, but of the Seven Deadly Sins, which are more definite, and also wider in their social reference: Pride, Avarice, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, Sloth. These categories of misconduct in thought and deed are by no means unintelligible to the man of the world; but they cannot mean to him the same thing that they mean to the Christian, because he has not the same sense of the mean-

ing of sin. To the man of the world, sin is essentially anti-social behaviour. To the Christian, it is like driving a nail into the hands of Christ upon the Cross.

(3) And here, finally, we come to the fundamental difference between the religious and the irreligious man, between the Christian and the pagan. It is something that goes very deep, and which influences and conditions—and has influenced and has conditioned—all our thought and all our conduct perhaps more profoundly and more comprehensively than we shall ever know; and, humanly speaking, it is the only thing that can preserve us, my brothers, from sinking into the slough of worldliness. The real and fundamental difference between the religious and the irreligious man is that the religious man knows his need of a Saviour: and the other does not.

THE STRONG MAN ARMED

The Right Rev. STEPHEN F. BAYNE, JR.

'... a house divided against a house falleth . . . when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me.'

ST. LUKE xi. 17, 22-23.

HERE are two sayings about *conflict*. One is our Lord's answer to a foolish criticism. The charge is made of Him by hostile witnesses, who have seen Him casting out a devil, who do not like what they have seen, and who accuse Him of being in league with evil Himself. 'He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.'

They are betrayed by their own hostility into making an idiotic charge. And His response is clear and simple and obvious. What they are suggesting is civil war. 'A house divided against a house falleth'; if evil be divided against itself, then evil will destroy itself. This is nonsense; and their accusation is nonsense.

And then He continues with the theme. They have begun the dialogue; He will finish it. For it is not merely a controversy about any particular healing. They have, without knowing it, without at all intending to, opened a door into a profound secret of God's action in human life. Very well; if they start on that path they must continue to the end with it. So He leads them step by step—first to look again at what any healing is anywhere, by anybody—then to face honestly the enormous new healing power which is at work in Him, a power so unmistakably great that it can only be the power of the Kingdom of

God already at work among them—finally, to contemplate deeply and with new and thoughtful eyes the whole amazing manner of God's way with us. 'When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.'

For nothing less than this is what lies at the end of the passage. The 'strong man armed' is any man; and the 'stronger than he' is, in the final analysis, none other than the Lord Himself. If those who cavil at His healing power will only look at it honestly and see it for what it is, they will be brought to see an infinitely greater miracle—His explosive invasion and capture of a human soul.

Yet both sayings, so widely different in their setting, are alike sayings about *conflict*. And 'conflict' is an unclean and suspect word in our time. Our psychologizers for a generation have warned us against conflict in the human spirit. Conflict is the enemy of 'adjustment.' Peace of mind is what we need and seek, not the stress and pain of conflict.

Very well, let that be as it may; the fact is that our Lord did not come to send peace; the fact is that it is not part of the Christian faith that people should be comfortably 'adjusted'; the fact is that conflict is, from beginning to end, irrevocably and certainly the means by which any human life is lived or comes to have any point; the fact is that conflict is the chief tool God uses in getting His work done in us.

That is what I mean to say. Now let me start again, where He began, to show why I want to say it. What began the dialogue was the healing of a dumb man, a man possessed of an evil spirit so powerful as even to imprison him within the walls of silence. Perhaps you have seen such a person in a hospital somewhere?—A

man or woman so profoundly sunk in himself that no door to the outward world remains? Physicians who minister to the mentally sick are familiar with such a depression, a depression so deep that it usurps and absorbs the whole of a personality. There is no will or energy or ability to think of anything except oneself, no other self can penetrate, no other self is real enough to break in, one is *possessed*.

And such a one is healed, is set free from this possession, and once again the crystal stream of words flows and sparkles, and a human community exists again. And they marvel, but not all, for some are jealous; and so the accusation of necromancy is made. Only an evil spirit could be so strong as to overcome this evil spirit. It is an absurd accusation. Perhaps they know this even as it is made. But the response is swift and clear—if evil destroys evil, then evil itself would have no power; the charge is absurd.

And this they understand, perforce. For they know that even in the human soul this is true—a man cannot be divided within himself. If he is, if his motives war against each other, if his purposes collide, if he wants contradictory things, then he is trapped. He is nobody, he is no more than the powerless victim of his conflicting impulses. And if this is so with us, how much more must it be so with the great powers of the universe.

Conflict is death and destruction. This is plain to see. 'A house divided' will not stand. What they have witnessed is no black magic; it is the unconquerable healing power of God, invading and destroying the power of evil, and setting this soul free. 'No doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you.'

But He does not leave it there. What they have seen is the despoiling of the strong man armed. He kept his

palace; he trusted that his goods were in peace; but there was One stronger than he who came upon him and overcame him. This is conflict again, this invasion and overturning of a man's own self. But this conflict is not death and destruction, it is the means of life. For it is not civil war within the kingdom of evil—it is the Kingdom of God coming upon us, to heal and to save. Woe to us if we do not choose this conflict! 'He that is not with me is against me.' Yet conflict it is, as tough and bitter and hard-fought as any in life. There is no cheap and easy way to salvation. There is no painless way to be made strong and free, as if we could be converted in our sleep.

The power of the Kingdom of God is not black magic. It is not magic at all. It is the deliberate conflict by which one kind of power is overthrown and destroyed by a totally different power. And it goes on within the stronghold of a man's own self, this 'palace' we keep so carefully. It cannot be a quarrel between evil and evil, for this is nonsense. It is a fight to the death between diametrical opposites. And the choice of this conflict is the fundamental choice men make.

So Christ teaches. And I do not know many of His teachings which we resist more than this. In the first place, we do not really believe all this business about the civil war. Of course, it is obvious that a house can't be divided against itself. Abraham Lincoln was elected to the Presidency because of one speech he made, more than any other—the famous 'House Divided' speech, in which he set it out so clearly that nobody could fail to see, that the United States could not endure indefinitely half-slave and half-free. Anybody can see that there must be unity within a nation, or within a human soul.

But we have a most extraordinary capacity for self-deception about this. Sometimes we deceive ourselves by dividing ends from means—by isolating what we want to accomplish from the way we intend to accomplish it, and then trying to balance off the 'good' at the end from the 'bad' involved in getting there. What does it matter, we say, what incidental wrong there may have been? It all came out in the end, and surely God is not going to sit in judgement like some tremendous book-keeper and add up all the little scores and balance them off against the great good at the end?

Of course He isn't. But the point is not that God is a book-keeper, but that we are; we are the ones who keep such meticulous score, as if life were a kind of bank where all that mattered was to avoid an overdraft. This is precisely the point. Life isn't that way at all; what a man does is not something separate from himself, like coins or tools. A man is what he does; he carries his acts along with him; the means all add up to the ends, and the infection of evil stays in the tissues of his acts, and he cannot set himself free from it.

If only God would be a book-keeper! But He is at once more frightening and more wonderful than that. It is the whole man that He knows and measures, including all our fumbling and pathetic book-keeping, but going infinitely beyond that to see all the evil interwoven with the good—to see the whole man exactly as we are, where we are. And that is exactly what we do not want. We want to deal with God as if He did keep a score, so that we can have this satisfaction of doing business at least as equals. And God has no intention of letting us deal with Him that way.

Therefore no score, no book-keeping, no careful balancing of evils and goods, no weighing of ends against

means, no civil war. A house divided against itself will not stand.

No more can a man make himself better for wrong motives. How many self-improvement schemes we dabble in, in the course of our lives! How many times we resolve to change ourselves because we do not much like what we are or we think others do not much like what we seem to be. But what a dreary record of failure these schemes so often are, when they are nothing more than a pose, a bit of shabby acting as if we were something other than we are. It isn't the acting that does the harm, it is the reason why we act. All life is acting, in one sense. All life is doing things we ought to do whether or not they are convenient or natural to us. All life is playing a part—the part of the person we know we ought to be and want to be. That kind of acting is the noblest expression of a man's freedom, and of his obedience to what he knows he ought to be.

But there is another reason for acting a part—that is the deliberate attempt to deceive, by outward appearance, by word or deed, in order to appear what we are not and do not really want to be. You know this kind of acting well. The pious look, the Bible on the table, the conventional attendance at church, the elaborate humility with which we manage to suggest how much effort it has been to bring up our children, the casual reference to the rather generous support we have given to this or that cause . . . again, the acting is not the point; what was done may have been a good in itself; but where there is a schism in a man's soul, where what he wants is only the appearance of good, where he acts that he may seem diametrically different from what he really wants to be, where a man's soul is torn in civil war, then

how swiftly can the best deeds become shameful and dirty and mean.

Let me help my neighbour in some quiet modest way—this is a good. But let me cherish that act in my memory, let me take it home with me, casually let it slip to my family at dinner, set it on the mantelpiece of my soul to look at, put it in my prayers that God may set my account right again—and what was simple and loving and good in an instant becomes a dark and evil thing.

A house divided—a kingdom divided—they will not stand, nor will a human soul stand long, divided against itself. This is the kind of conflict that kills the spirit of man. Even the weakest and most foolish of us knows this. We hardly needed Christ to teach us this.

Therefore Christ did not stop with saying that conflict is death and destruction. He went on to speak again of conflict, but to speak of it in terms of the invading and conquering power of God to heal and to redeem. This is harder for us to see, for it, too, looks like civil war, from the inside. If you let God into your life, there is no telling what He will not change in you. He will take possession, take control of you and all that is yours. Better keep Him at a distance—give Him what He wants, pay Him the honour due, offer Him the conventional acts of a Christian society, agree with Him against the most spectacular sins, do anything a reasonable man can do, but don't let Him take over.

Is this too unfair a sketch to draw of the conventional morality of conventional people? I don't think so; I know this kind of bargaining with God myself too well to be gentle with it. Like many another Christian, I have had to fight all my life for the freedom to make a true offering of myself to God, and I am under no illusion as to how seldom it is possible.

Yet even the weakest of us really want Him to take over. Even the blindest of us and the least converted of us know how close He comes to taking over. Even against our wills, sometimes, He comes into the palace of our life, where we have arranged all our goods, in peace—children and career and security and health and reputation—and in a moment He takes over, and we stand aghast at the One who is stronger than we are. Death comes; we lose a job; life makes us take some new and unknown path; we are suddenly called on to yield what we had hoped we might somehow keep for ourselves. . . . There is One stronger than us who is knocking at the door of our palace. And everything in us rebels against this, against the invasion, against the claims He makes on us.

Why cannot we go along keeping and holding what is ours? Why must all our easy natural way of life be changed? Why must we say 'No' to instincts and hungers and desires which well up from the depths of our own nature? Why accept this division in our own life?

I daresay that no Christian who has ever tried to keep Lent has not had a friend say to him, 'Why do you do this?—Why do you hark back to these mediaeval ideas of discipline?' How many the voices that tell us that the discipline of the Christian is simply conflict, and it brings repressions and fears and all the other scars of conflict in its train? It is conflict; there is no discipline on earth which does not mean saying no when we want with all our hearts to say yes. But to say it is conflict is to say nothing of any importance. For this conflict is not a civil war; this is the persistent, loving, conquering invasion of the One stronger than us, who comes into our palace and takes over, to make all our possessions and all our instincts His own.

This conflict, we know in our hearts, is not death at all—it is the very means of life. But it is not any easier, all the same.

I remember, in my first parish, in the very darkest days of the depression of the thirties, a man who came to the church just at dusk, and asked for help. He was not simply a beggar; he said that he had noticed how our lawn needed weeding—said that he had been a gardener for a time, and that he would be glad to earn whatever I felt I could pay for a good job well done. So we struck a deal, and in a few days the job was done and he had rightly earned his food and shelter. But then, before I could say good-bye, he told me that once he had been a glazier, and that he had noticed that some of our windows were cracked, and that if I would carry on with him, he would repair them. And so he did, and for another few days kept body and soul together. And when the windows were repaired, then it was the roof, for he had done that work; and then it turned out that he had been a carpenter, and then a plumber, and so on and on—before we were done, it turned out that he had been a cook, and he developed a thriving trade preparing parish suppers! There was no way to get rid of him; he simply took over; all that needed doing around our church was done, in a wonderfully gentle and somehow invincible spirit which was quite unforgettable.

So it is with God. Let Him once in, and there is no help for it—He simply takes over, and makes His own all that we had thought was ours. But it does not happen easily, nor cheaply. There is conflict in it, and cost, and discipline. But it is not the conflict of a weak and divided soul. It is the conflict of a strong soul, strong enough to open the door of his life and let to the Stronger

than he come in, to reorder his life, and make it what it ought to be.

Christianity is for strong people. It is a strong man's faith. It is conflict. But it is the conflict of a man fighting for the freedom to give himself wholeheartedly and with a single mind to that which is not only stronger than he, but that which he desires more than anything else in the world. There is no use our deceiving ourselves that peace of mind and unity of spirit can come merely by being pleasant and relaxed. Lent and all it stands for—all the conflict and cost of a strong man's discipline—these things are not sentimental mediaevalisms. They are not for weak and flabby people.

That's why our Lord ended His little discourse with such an uncompromising and frightening phrase. 'He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.' There is no use trying to edit this kind of tough honesty out of the Christian religion. What we need to pray for is not a religion without pain or cost; what we need to pray for is the sturdy courage to open the door to the One who is stronger than we, and to let Him come in and make us over. This is the timeless lesson of Christian discipline. It is a lesson in freedom, really, even though the world looks at us with astonishment because we call it freedom. To the sceptic outside, it looks like a divided house—when a man says 'no' when he wants to say 'yes,' and he closes doors that everything in nature bids him open. But this is no rebellion. This is the strong man welcoming the Stronger, the free man choosing the Master he means to serve. As it was with Christ so it is with us. The forty days of His Lent, like our own, are the days of strength. The way of the Cross is the way of strength.

Then welcome this conflict with all your hearts, that your hearts may be single and whole, and not divided. For a house divided against itself cannot stand; and only the strong can choose to be whole.

RECEIVING CHRIST

The Rev. NICOLAS GRAHAM, C.R.

'He came unto his own, and his own received him not.'—ST. JOHN i. 11.

TO turn away a stranger from your door may not be a very kind or Christian thing to do; yet it may sometimes be a prudent, even a necessary thing to do. In any case it is understandable, and on human grounds excusable—after all, the man is a stranger; he has no possible claim on you. Politely, but firmly, you refuse him entrance, and send him away.

But suppose there comes, unexpectedly, to your door, a friend or relation you have not seen for years, or one who is a stranger to you but who carries letters or greetings from someone you know and love, or one whom you have been told by your friends to expect, even suppose a son who has long left home in disgrace. If any of these came to your door, would you turn them away?

Certainly not. Even if you were not particularly pleased, you would recognize that your visitor had a claim on you. If you could not show him love, you would at least be just. In some sense you would feel that he had come to his own.

But when Jesus Christ came, His own received Him not. Who were His own? Well, the whole world is His own, and certainly the world did not receive Him, and has not to this day. Mankind is His own: His favourite name for Himself was Son of Man, but among the sons of men He found nowhere to lay His head.

But when St. John says: 'His own received Him not' he was thinking of the Jews. They were God's chosen race whom he had prepared through many centuries to expect and receive Him. And when He came to His own, His very own people, His own received Him not.

There was no room for Him in the inn at Bethlehem, His human family home. There was no room for Him in the synagogue at Nazareth, the home of His childhood and young manhood. Indeed the people of Nazareth not only rejected Him; they tried to kill Him.

And now He comes to Jerusalem, on what we call Palm Sunday. Of course, He had been there before many times, but this was a special occasion. He did what He had never done before; He made a deliberately dramatic entry.

By ordinary worldly standards it was perhaps a slightly comic or ridiculous entry. A Roman soldier in a well-known Passion Play, witnessing this entry, and hearing the crowd hail Jesus as King, comments: 'A King on a ruddy donkey.' A white charger or a triumphal chariot would have seemed more appropriate to Him—and, I expect, to you and me. But the pious Jewish pilgrims recognized this entry for what it was; the fulfilment of a prophecy. A verse out of the prophet Zechariah had suddenly come to life: 'Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass.' So Zion rejoiced, and Jerusalem shouted: 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna to the Son of David.'

At last they recognize Him for who He is. He has come unto His own, and His own receive Him. There is no knowing what hopes and joys those pilgrims felt that day. Jesus went, as would be expected, to the Temple. Would

He there claim His rights, enthrone Himself on the mercy-seat and rule the world in righteousness and peace? Would all the prophecies come true? Had the good time promised really come at last?

You and I know that their hopes were disappointed. His kingdom was not to be of this world; His victory not over the Romans, but over sin and death; His triumphal entry made, into heaven, by means of a wooden cross. His own received Him as a King—even, since the prophet so foretold it, as a humble and lowly King. But a suffering King, a King who would accept a slave's death amid the mockery of His enemies, a king who would draw down on Himself the curse of the Law, by hanging on a tree? 'Write not' said the Jewish high priest. 'Write not: the King of the Jews; but that he said I am the King of the Jews.'

His own received Him not.

And you and I, who are very much His own—do we receive Him? or not? Our reply is, 'Of course we receive Him: we would not turn Christ from our door.'

Pray God that may be true. No doubt it is true. We have received Him in Baptism, in Holy Communion, in Absolution, in Christian fellowship, in the Bible, in the lives of others, in answer to prayer. All that is true. My heart most gladly takes in the Babe of Bethlehem, the strong compassionate prophet of Nazareth—yes, and the resplendent Christ of Easter morning. But before we reach that morning we must keep Holy Week. In Holy Week the Church calls us to pass through the valley of the shadow of death with our Lord. And if we are to receive the Christ of Holy Week we must be prepared for two things.

First, we must be ready to share His suffering; not literally—we cannot do that—but we must be prepared

both to suffer for our loyalty to Him, and to receive and embrace all the pains and sorrows of life as our share in the one great sacrifice which redeems the world.

Secondly, in receiving the Christ of Holy Week we receive the conqueror of sin, and from this we shrink even more than from sharing His pains. For if there is really to be room for Him in my heart, then there is much that must be cast out of my heart—sins that I must allow Him to conquer and kill.

It is all very well to hail Him with glad Hosannas on Palm Sunday. He has come to reign—not on an earthly throne, but in your soul and mine. And before He can reign there, the present occupant of that throne—myself—must abdicate.

THE POINT OF NO RETURN

The Rev. PETER K. WALKER

'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.'—ST. LUKE xix. 38.

A YEAR ago it fell to me to preach on Palm Sunday to a congregation of boys of a Borstal school. What should it, or could it, mean to the young delinquent there?

It would not be difficult to paint in words a picture of Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. The scene lends itself to it. But what does it all add up to for a Borstal boy? Or, indeed, for you and me, at such a long remove? In a way, the more clearly we can visualize that actual entry into that ancient city, the greater danger we are in of resting in a distant scene without asking what it means for us.

Suppose that one talked first, then, not about palm branches and clothes spread in the way, but of how men make journeys, sometimes with risks involved. Of how those, for example, who plan an expedition, will allow at times for a point which, once passed, permits of no return: when stores or fuel will cover only the bare distance between two places, then, once beyond a certain point on the way, you are past the point of no return.

Such a point beyond all going back was passed on Palm Sunday. Jerusalem once entered, and entered publicly as it was, physically there might be a turning back: morally, unless a situation changed in certain ways, there could be no return without the resignation of a whole life's journey's end.

If, then, we ask what brought this man on this day past this point at the entrance to Jerusalem, there is an

answer which at first seems vague but is, for all that, literally and precisely true. Jesus was brought there by his love for sinners. From the beginning, the religious men of Jerusalem had resented his association with the disreputable: intolerable had been his insistence that they might even enter heaven first: quite understandably, on their own premises, the religious men had cried out that this was at its heart subversion. Yet he had gone on mixing with these publicans and sinners. Had he remained outside Jerusalem, that would perhaps have been all: to enter that city was to pass the point of no return in his concern for the outsider. As you read the Gospels you may see that Jesus died quite literally for his love for sinners.

Does Palm Sunday, then, tell us simply of one more man—there had been others before, there have been others since—who went on, further he could not go, because there was for him no going back upon the chosen pattern of his life?

Suppose, on the other hand, that what the Gospel asserts is true: that this man was the Son of God? What then? Does God Himself, in the Person of His Son, go in His love for sinners past the point of no return? Will God go with us all the way, although, since men's sinfulness, the sinfulness of sinners and the sinfulness of righteous men, my sinfulness and your sinfulness, is what it is, His going with us takes Christ to the Cross? If I have made my bed in Hell, will God in Christ have been there too?

The Gospel says no less, to the Borstal boy, and to you and me.

In a novel which has seemed to me in recent days to have, in its compassionate understanding of a contemporary agony of spirit, no less in it of the Cross

than many an explicitly 'Lenten' book—for Pierre-Henri Simon's *Portrait of an Officer* describes the turmoil of a man who moves through a changing pattern of war, in Europe, Indo-China, Algeria, to the point at which he must make his final abnegation since he has inquired the end of *his* journey—there is this picture of a day when war had still its chivalry. His tank knocked out, the French officer crawls out of it, wounded, to be picked up by his German enemy, who hoists him on the front of his own vehicle. "I'll drop you off at the first regimental aid-post we come across. . . ." He got back into his turret, and ordered the tank to move on. . . . Then we came to a road and had to follow it as far as a bridge over a canal. It was a nasty place because the French artillery was concentrating on this unavoidable route. The German subaltern stopped his tank, got out, and said to me: "As you see, there's quite a bit of shelling; I'm not in much danger in my turret; but you might catch it here in front. . . . I'll put you down here, and you'll soon be picked up." But I told him I was bleeding a great deal, and that if I didn't find a doctor in the next half-hour, it would be too late. Taking it all in all, I said, I'd rather go on with him. "Just as you please," he said. And then this soldier, this enemy, made the most splendid and noble gesture I've ever heard of. Instead of getting back into his turret, he climbed up in front and sat beside me, telling his driver to drive on. And so we drove through the shelling, under a hail of splinters, comrades in war, and with an equal chance of death.¹

If Palm Sunday has anything to tell us about God, it tells us, astonishingly, that God deals with us like that.

¹ Pierre-Henri Simon, *Portrait of an Officer*, trans. Humphrey Hare, Secker and Warburg, 1961, pp. 18-19.

God puts Himself at man's side in the face of death, the death that comes from man's stupidity and sin, and God, in Jesus Christ, goes all the way with us. So Christ goes on, and dies.

And now, having shared with you these thoughts of what a preacher might find to say on Palm Sunday to people in a particular situation of need, and yet a situation which we all share—for all of us are equally beggars before God, and that was the offence of Christ's teaching to the righteous of this world—I will ask you to go with me one step farther.

God, in Christ, goes with men past the point of no return, although men's sinfulness may take Christ to the Cross. Here, then, is, indeed, a royal love for men. It is of the royalty of that love that I would have you think.

When the German officer in the novel put himself alongside the man exposed outside the turret of his tank, here, we might say, was a royal act of sympathy, an action such that the Frenchman could only say of it afterwards, 'Known or unknown, alive or dead, whether I kill him or he me, one thing is sure, I shall never have a better friend in all the world.' Such, we might say, was Christ's love: a more princely love, a sympathy more kingly and more generous, we have never known.

All that, indeed, the Christian says; but he must say something more.

When the Gospel writers point to the hosannas of the crowd, 'Blessed be the *King* that cometh in the name of the Lord,' what is the truth behind the salutation, however, quite, the crowd saw their salutation? When Jesus stands before Pilate and hears the question 'Art Thou the King of the Jews?' and answers 'Thou sayest,' and will not deny that He is King, so that the soldiers take the point and dress Him in ribaldry as a king, a

mock-up crown on His head, and a mock-up sceptre in His hand; when Pilate puts upon the Cross the inscription 'The King of the Jews' and will not qualify that title for all the importunity of the Jews—behind all the irony of a disbelieving world one thing stands clear: there was an issue here: King, or not a king? We have to do not simply with a person who was regal in His attitude before His accusers and His judges, though He was that; nor simply with a man who was in the place He was because of a royal love for sinners such that in their better moments they might say of Him 'No man could have loved us more.' We are faced with a claim to a kingship, a claim accepted by Jesus when put to Him in those words, a claim disputed by His enemies, and disputed by them in His blood.

It meets us, this, at every point in the events of those last days in Jerusalem. It meets us in the question put to Him, 'By what authority doest thou these things?' It is implicit, if we will think it out, in the question of the tribute-money, and his answer. 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar? . . .' And He saith unto them 'Whose is this image and superscription?' And they said unto Him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And because they were not honest inquirers they did not stop to ask Him 'But what things, then, are God's?' Caesar's image on the tribute-coin claims the coin as Caesar's; is there anything with God's image on it to claim it as God's own? Had they asked that, they would have penetrated to the heart of things. For God created man in His image, Christ would remind us, and in the image of God created He man: and so God claims him, all that he is, and all that he does, including what he rightly does for Caesar,

all of man and all men, the sovereign Lord of all creation claims as uniquely His own.

Here is indeed the heart of the matter: and here is the spring of Christ's love for men. Christ's love for them is not quite simply a man's sentiment of sympathy, as though Jesus was just built that way, to sympathize. Christ's love for men is God active on earth in word and deed as man among men to claim all men, righteous men, as the world sees them, *and* sinful men, alike, as His own.

Think, then, of the love of Jesus going all the way with men. But do not so think of it as to leave out of account the deeper truth on which it stands, the truth that Christ in the name of the sovereign God claims us for ever as God's own. And when God, the All-Holy, claims you so, in all that you are and all that you do, there is God's royal love for you.

But then do you see this for the frightening thing that it is? I cannot think of an all-holy God claiming me for Himself, without thinking with what eyes He will behold me when I stand before Him, the sinner that I am, with Him, all-holy, claiming me.

Yet on Good Friday, in the face of all our sin, this righteous God claimed us as His own. In the turmoil of the Cross, in the face of all that cried out to deny that we are His, in judgement of this sin of ours that denied it and denies it, by God at man's side to the uttermost in Christ that victorious claim was staked.

This is the truth that we are thrust against in Holy Week. And in Holy Week, therefore, and on Good Friday in particular, the Church must speak not only of God's love—God's dearest love for all—but of God's *holy* love. It must speak of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement, as part of the message of God's love. 'If we spoke less about God's love,' says that great

interpreter of the Cross, Peter Taylor Forsyth, 'and more about His holiness, we should say much more when we did speak of His love.'

It is a holy love, a righteous love, a royal and a kingly love that, going with men beyond all turning back on them, will claim us sinners as God's own. Blessed, then, be this Christ, the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.

ACCEPTING THE CROSS

THE REV. KENNETH N. ROSS

'And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear his cross.'

ST. MARK XV. 21.

HOW Simon must have hated it! A pious Jew, he had made the long journey from Tripoli in North Africa in order to be able to eat the Passover at the most sacred place in the whole world, Jerusalem. He had arrived in good time, he had seen the sights of the Holy City, he had attended the daily sacrifices in the Temple, he had admired the immense blocks of stone which were being used for the completion of the great edifice, and, every night, weary with the day's excitement, he had left Jerusalem for the farm in the little village not far from the city, where he was staying. Just as Jesus and His followers lodged at Bethany over the Festival, so Simon had his quiet place of retreat, where he would rest after the hectic activities of the day. On this never-to-be-forgotten day, he had risen early, and set out to go into the city. The slaughter of the Paschal lambs would not take place until the early afternoon, but there was much to see and do in the meanwhile, in particular to notice the gradual cessation of all work as the day advanced, until by midday all the shops were shut.

He had just got to the gate of the city, when the clatter of hobnails was heard on the cobbles. Roman soldiers were approaching, and so Simon moves to one side of the gate until they have gone by. As it is early on a festival morning there is hardly anyone else about.

The steps approach, and he sees that three criminals are being led out for crucifixion. Each one is carrying the crossbeam on which within an hour his body will be hanging. It is a grim sight to meet one's gaze on Passover day, and Simon could not refrain from catching his breath. As the prisoners come up to him, one of them falls. A soldier kicks the prostrate figure, but he does not move. At last he is pulled to his feet, but it is obvious that he can scarcely walk, let alone carry the heavy crossbeam. The officer in charge doesn't know what to do, for it is out of the question that any of his soldiers should carry the thing. Then his eye falls on the sturdy figure of Simon. 'Hey, you there; in the name of the Emperor I command you to carry this cross to Golgotha instead of the prisoner.' There is no getting out of it, and Simon bends down to pick the beam up. It was ignominious in the extreme to be forced into such a task; and on Passover day above all others. How Simon must have hated it!

'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.' Yes, but Simon didn't want to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, he had no desire to be a Christian. Yet he had to bear a cross all the same. Willy nilly the cross was thrust upon him; the only alternatives open to him were accepting it willingly and accepting it unwillingly. He could carry it, cursing his bad luck at every step, and wishing that he had decided to come into the city later in the morning, or he could carry it, accepting the duty that had been forced upon him, and even welcoming the opportunity of lowering his pride and self-conceit.

I wonder in what sort of spirit we receive the many different trials and troubles that visit us? Some come to us as a result of our own foolishness and sinfulness; if you

spend your money recklessly and don't plan your expenditure, you ought not to be surprised to find the bailiffs on your doorstep one morning. But some troubles arise from other people's sins; you may be carefully saving money for the future, and then the bank which holds your money defaults. Other troubles occur as a result, apparently, of sheer bad luck; it is often nobody's fault if the crops turn out badly one year. What is our attitude to these different troubles?

Many people, I am afraid, blame fortune or God even for the results of their stupidity. They are like the small boy whom I saw fall over in the street a few days ago. He hadn't been looking where he was going, and so he tumbled over. When he got up again, rather tearful, he cast such an angry look at the ground; he clearly thought that the pavement had no right to make his knees hurt so much when he fell down. What a common human weakness that is! We go round telling spiteful tales about our friends, and then complain bitterly when, at long last, they turn against us. What a lot of spoilt children there are, yes, and spoilt parents too, who behave with quite abominable selfishness, and then complain that everyone is against them. Like one of the thieves who suffered with our Saviour, we appeal for help, only to be reminded by our friends, our candid friends, that we can hardly expect help, 'for we receive the due reward of our deeds.' It's no good upbraiding God: we suffer because we deserve to suffer. What we must do is to recognize this, and then we may presume to add, 'Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.' As the Collect (*Lent IV*) says, for our evil deeds we worthily deserve to be punished; but admitting that, we go on to appeal that by the comfort of God's grace we may mercifully be relieved.

But it is more difficult to bear the various afflictions that come to us without our having provoked them. Sudden bereavement, undeserved loss of a job, unexpected illness, the heartless breaking off of an engagement, these things often make a man or a woman very bitter, both towards their fellow men and towards God. Why has this happened to them? What have they done to deserve this? Notice one thing first. The people who complain in this way have not in the past, when everything was going smoothly, asked the question, 'What have I done to deserve all this good fortune, these blessings of a good home and loving friends, and a decent job?' They have taken all that as a matter of course; it was only right that they should be treated like that. I know that I, who have been called upon to suffer very little indeed, easily fall into this self-centred and ungrateful state of mind. Do you see that it all springs from a wrong idea of God? If I expect the world to be governed with a view to my convenience and for my comfort, I am turning God into someone who exists just for my benefit. I have forgotten that the truth is that I exist to promote His glory: He does not exist to promote mine. I have been taught to pray, 'Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.' But if I expect my life to be a bed of roses, it is clear that the prayer of my heart is, 'Hallowed be MY name, MY kingdom come, MY will be done.' You know, the fool who says in his heart, There is no God, probably says I believe in God, with his lips. It's what the heart says that matters, every time.

But there is another wrong attitude which we sometimes take up, when we feel we have been wrong in expecting all beer and skittles. We try to tell ourselves, or our friends, especially our friends, that these disasters

are sent to try us, or that they are all for the best, or that they are blessings in disguise. Now this sounds a very religious attitude to take up, and, as we shall see, there *is* an element of truth in it. But as it stands, it is quite unchristian. *Is* the death of your baby any sort of blessing? Is it not rather thoroughly evil? Can we really imagine the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ sending disasters in order to try us? A thousand times, no! Such an attitude rests on the entirely unchristian belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. Christianity teaches that sin has spoilt the world, and that the work of Christ consists just in bringing the world back to God out of the power of evil. Many things, therefore, happen in the world which are quite certainly not in accordance with the will of God. It is therefore blasphemous to call such unhappy occurrences a blessing in disguise, or to say that it is all for the best.

But the truth of the matter lies in this, that though the disaster which takes place may be entirely evil and contrary to the will of God, yet it is possible to bring good out of it. This is most clearly seen in the crucifixion of our Lord Himself. No action could be more completely evil and opposed to God's will than the death of Jesus; it marked the victory of the forces of darkness. Yet the crucifixion marks the utter defeat of the powers of darkness, and the Cross has been productive of the greatest good: by it mankind is reconciled to God. But that does not make the crucifixion any the less evil and vile; what we must lay to heart is that even the most evil and most vile can be miraculously made to produce good, if only they are willingly accepted by the sufferer. Jesus shrank from pain, as we or anyone else shrinks from pain, but finding that the Father's will was that He should endure it, He accepted it willingly, for He knew that it

would bring salvation to the world. 'For the joy that was set before Him' He 'endured the cross, despising the shame.' He suffered all that evil could inflict, and never stopped loving. Now what is true of Jesus must be true of us. 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus'; we too, if we *must* suffer, must suffer gladly, because that very acceptance of suffering robs the suffering of its evil effects. It was Coleridge who said, 'What we must do, let us love to do. It is a noble chemistry that turns necessity into pleasure.' It is a hard lesson, but it is the lesson of the Cross. How blessed are those who have learnt it! I could speak of a French lady who died in 1914, whose whole life was one of suffering. Her husband was a violent atheist all her life, but she never ceased to pray for him, and to ask that her sufferings and death might be so united with the Saviour's that they might avail for his conversion. And so it happened. After her death her husband came across her private diary, in which the heroic sanctity of her soul was at last revealed to him; he confessed his sins and became a fervent Christian. It reminds me of a saying I heard recently: 'Pain resented is hell: pain conquered is power.' Or again, I have just been reading in a Church paper of the death of a priest. He was for some years an electrical engineer in a well-paid job. His only son died unexpectedly while at his public school. Did this embitter him, and make him cry out against the injustice of God? No. 'For him this severe blow marked but a new phase of his self-consecration. He resolved to offer himself for the place in the Ministry to which his son had been looking forward; and laying down the good position which he had achieved as an electrical engineer,' he went to a Theological College and was himself ordained. 'This

severe blow marked but a new phase of his self-consecration.' Is it in that spirit that we bear trouble?

Listen to some words from *The Imitation of Christ*:

'If thou carry the cross cheerfully, it will carry thee. . . . If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest for thyself a burden, and addest to thy load: and yet thou must bear. If there had been any thing better and more profitable to man's salvation than suffering, Christ would surely have shown it by word and example.'

Did Simon of Cyrene bear the Cross of Jesus willingly or unwillingly? At first, as I have said, I think he hated the task, but after the first shock he accepted it philosophically, and then, when he had had time to observe the dignified and patient calm of Jesus, he accepted it gladly. Why do I think that? Well, when St. Mark tells the story, he describes Simon of Cyrene as being 'the father of Alexander and Rufus.' The Christians at Rome for whom he was writing must have known Alexander and Rufus, and I notice that when St. Paul sent his letter to Rome, he added greetings to Rufus and his mother. It's clear that they were Christians, and I like to think that the conversion of that family began with that carrying of the Cross by the father, Simon, on Good Friday. He was the first-fruits of the fulfilment of our Lord's prophecy, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.'

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*Greek inscriptions on the Good Friday
Cross at "Hillspeak" are translated:
"The King of the Jews . . . And he was
numbered with the transgressors."*

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